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ABSTRACT

Beginning in the mid-1960s, thousands of small alternative schools sprang up across the United States and Canada. These schools varied widely in programs and policies, but common factors among them were a disenchantment with conventional schooling, a desire to reform education, and (frequently) the belief that schools should be controlled by the population served, including children. The National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools was formed in 1976. Its journal from 1985 to 1990 was SKOLE (from a Greek word for the type of dialectical activity conducted by Socrates). This volume contains selected articles published during that period. Six articles profile small alternative schools: Shaker Mountain School (Burlington, Vermont); Sudbury Valley School (Framingham, Massachusetts); Metropolitan School of Columbus (Ohio); the Free School (Albany, New York); L'Ecole d'Humanite (Goldern, Switzerland); and Central Park East (New York, New York). Other articles and reprints discuss teaching the American Constitution; child-adult relationships in learning situations; alternative schools in early America; a high school student's perspective on alternative versus conventional education; community-building processes in a national coalition of educators; homeschooling, experiential learning, and the vision of John Holt; children's theater as education; refuting Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences; peace education; what's wrong with public education; the outdoors as "school"; movement education; teaching, learning, and schooling in the works of Piaget, Skinner, and Dewey; and comparisons of learner outcomes of children schooled at home and in school. Also included are four poems and three book reviews. (SV)

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CHALLENGING THE GIANT

THE BEST OF ΣΚΟΛΕ

The Journal of Alternative Education

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Mary M. Leue, Editor

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The Journal of Alternative Education

Mary M. Leue, Editor

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CHALLENGING THE GIANT:

The Best of ΣΚΟΛΕ

the journal of alternative education

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INTRODUCTION:

This collection of writings from the alternative education community represents six years of the little journal **ΣΚΟΛΕ**, which was born at a fall, 1985, gathering of northeastern members of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools, and was its official organ until the fall of 1990, at which time the Board of the Coalition decided they wanted a more in-house publication representing them.

The editor/publisher has always felt that those six years of publication of **ΣΚΟΛΕ** represents a far more impressive witness to the unique value for the general public - and for the teachers, administrators and families alike of children in the public schools - than its relatively small readership might suggest.

Consequently, the decision was made to put together a volume of some of the more challenging and yet broadly based of those articles, hoping that they will prove to be of value to non-alternative readers, coming, as they do, largely from "inside" the alternative community, from the people actually "doing" alternative schooling, whether school- or home-based.

The number of contributors to **ΣΚΟΛΕ** has never been as varied as one might wish for, perhaps because the alternative school movement has relatively few theorists in its midst, most being actively engaged in teaching, problem-solving, and working with children, with very little leisure time for formulating in print what they have been doing. We hope this fact need not deter our readers from recognizing the ring of truth emanating from the experiences of the few!

EDITORIAL COMMENT:

WHY ΣΚΟΛΕ? STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES BEHIND THE NAME AND ITS ROLE IN THE HISTORY OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLING

by Mary M. Leue, Editor of ΣΚΟΛΕ

The following editorial is reproduced from the Winter, 1988 issue of ΣΚΟΛΕ, being a statement of the philosophical principles adopted by the little group that originally proposed this journal and gave it its name at that gathering of the northeastern branch of the NCACS in the summer of 1985. Since the name ΣΚΟΛΕ has apparently felt mysterious to some of our subscribers, I thought it might help to reproduce the earlier statement.

This little periodical is now entering its third year of life, having begun with the Fall, 1985, issue - although presently biannual rather than quarterly. Looking back to that first issue, it is apparent that the scope of our publication has gradually enlarged to include educational issues wider than simply a focus on the development of children's skills and sensibilities - and properly so, it seems to this observer. After all, the name ΣΚΟΛΕ ("Sko-lay") originated in ancient Athens as a term designating the kind of dialectical activity first conducted by Socrates by buttonholing passers-by wherever he found himself and engaging them in a process known as the "Socratic method" of question and answer, gradually wringing from them either a confession of ignorance or a final definition of the subject under discussion that would hold water.

This process gradually evolved into the method of engaging in friendly conversation interspersed with question and answer which we can still follow in Plato's dialogues - the Academy - founded some twenty years after Socrates' death. Plato's Academy became, according to B.A.G. Fuller (*A History of Philosophy*, Holt, 1955) "the first university in Europe," focusing on his notion of The Republic as "an ideal commonwealth, of whose constitution it was a fundamental article that the rulers should be men of philosophic training and vision, conversant with the immutable principles upon which all real being and all right action rest.

The curriculum of the Academy covered a wide variety of subjects ranging from politics to metaphysics, the nature of knowledge, ethics and immortality. It is with this broad definition of "school" that this journal is concerned, although its primary focus will always be on what might be designated "primal learning," the early learning that must of necessity come first, and on which all subsequent learning rests. Plato believed in the necessity of "edifying influences" on the young, particularly those of poetry and music - especially learning to play a musical instrument. John Holt might be said to have carried Plato's belief to its humanistic conclusion (in *Never Too Late*), warning even while extolling the value of music and learning to play an instrument:

> Most of all, I want to combat the idea that any disciplined and demanding activity, above all music, can never grow out of love, joy and free choice, but must be rooted in forced exposure, coercion and threat... nothing is more certain to make most people ignore or even hate great music than trying to ram more and more of it down the throats of more and more children in compulsory classes and lessons. The idea is wrong in a larger sense; in the long run, love and joy are more enduring sources of discipline and commitment than any amount of bribe and threat, and it is only what C. Wright Mills called the 'crackpot realism' of our times that keeps us from seeing, or even being willing to see, that this is so.

This "first principle" of voluntary choice of "the good" in all areas of life on earth has become in recent years far more an unchosen mandate than simply one of many options for living. During this period of time, planetary life has been undergoing a process of accelerated change of a paradoxical kind, I believe, moving simultaneously in two diametrically opposing directions - one, a growing sensitization to and awareness of the delicacy, beauty and vulnerability of our common ground, the earth, as our Mother - the other an equally increasing rate of indifferently mindless pollution of her air, water and land. She is becoming, unwillingly, more and more unable to sustain life! Using the paradigm of the stock market, participation in which one might liken in its addictiveness to the unnaturally heightened physiological/

psychic effects of cocaine or heroine usage, the crash came to most people totally unanticipated, a terrific shock! And yet, the warning signs of economic disease were surely evident to those who had the capacity to look and listen! Can we look at the global evidence of coming ecological (let alone political and economic) disaster before it is upon us? It is "ΣΚΟΛΕ" at a global level of awareness which becomes mandatory at this juncture.

I hope you can read this volume in the light of this histori-cal statement. It is my profound belief that one of the most significant issues we face as global citizens is how to distinguish between our passions, our passionate beliefs, principles, convic-tions - which I certainly wouldn't want to give up! - and what it is going to take to learn to live and work together to save the planet, let alone our little lives and careers; in particular, awareness of the relationship between our institutional history and its subse-uent development.

The periodical *Holistic Education Review* (**HER**) arises from a basis within this historical context, and the article "Alternative Schools in Early America," by Ron Miller, editor of ***HER***, emphasizes the crucial importance of understanding our own educational history and learning to make bridges between and among the many models for learning (including that of the public school system) which have arisen in the context of our historically naive yet innovative, venturesome society.

Miller makes it clear that each of these educational alternatives which we claim as our own - Montessori, Waldorf, Homeschooling, Progressive, Humanistic, Modern, Froebelian and probablysome others I can't think of - actually arose in the homelands of the industrialized nations of the Old World, in response to their own particular needs. They have been adopted or adapted by us to our own need for educational reform with very little modification or even awareness of the consequent wrenching out of context of the original model involved in that adaptation.

Phil Gang's article, "Educating for Peace," comes out of an allied but older tradition now embodied in a new organization whose acronym is GATE (Global Alliance for Transforming Education) which represents leaders from all the educational alternatives coming together to offer new perspectives on education to the educational establishment. GATE, in its statement of principles, formulated in the summer of 1990, insists that truly holistic education must include the context of our human lives as part of a universal context which includes the spiritual dimension as its true setting.

As perhaps the most recent of those innovations, the Free School movement of the sixties and seventies emphasized primarily the libertarian theme which, in the simplistic terms formulated during the days of heady revolutionary fervor generated by young people during the sixties might be stated simply as, "Free the children!"

Under the aegis of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools (NCACS) this libertarian fervor devolved into an institutional policy issue of community control by schools themselves including the children. This policy was written into the original statement of principles formulated in Chicago in 1976. It might be well to reprint the entirety of this statement of principles as adopted by the infant organization at this meeting, and to reproduce the historical context out of which they arose.

The account of that birth given by Pat Montgomery, first president of the NCACS, taken from the first directory of the Coalition for 1981 -2, published at Clonlara, Pat's school, is the best one I could possibly find:

> In May 1976, at the "Education for Change" conference of the Alternative Schools Network in Chicago, representatives from several hundred alternative programs laid the initial groundwork for a national coalition of alternative community schools. They drafted the following statement:
>
> > We are a national coalition of schools, groups and individuals committed to creating an egalitarian society by actively working against racism, sexism, ageism and all forms of social, political and economic oppression. The objectives of the Coalition are:
> >
> > **1. To support an educational process which is alternative in intention, working to empower people to actively and collectively direct their lives.**
> > **2. To support an educational process which is alternative in form, requiring the active control of education by students, parents, teachers and community members who are most directly affected.**
> > **3. To support an educational process which is alternative in content, developing tools and skills to work for social change.**
>
> For a few years the group was relatively inactive. In June 1978, some few met again, this time in Ann Arbor, Michigan, to adopt by-laws, file corporation papers and set a structural NCACS framework. Further planning was done at a meeting the following November in Denver, Colorado, where board

> members were elected—three from each region of the country (East, Middle, and West). It was at the Columbus, Ohio, 1979 Spring conference that the NCACS actually became a living, functioning entity. Over 100 people from ten states and Washington, D.C., shared a weekend of workshops: networking, home-study, young people's rights,funding and a variety of other activities geared toward continued communication. Enthusiasm and commitment to the purposes of NCACS grew...

Thus the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools was born, defining its purposes as empowerment through education, active, shared intra-institutional control and educational process as work for social change. By the time this directory came out, the Coalition was already five years old, and well-accepted by its members, as Pat's account makes very clear.

What had happened in this country during the sixties Pat describes as follows:

> **What is the National Coalition?**
>
> Well, in the beginning were the schools. Free schools or Freedom Schools. New schools. Community schools. Alternative schools. They were founded by parents, teachers, and students, either through a combination of efforts or by one person acting alone. Founders were inspired by A. S. Neill and his school, Summerhill, which he had opened in Leiston, England, in the 1920s. Others responded to the Civil Rights movement and the need for poor people to take control of their own communities. Others desired new lifestyles for themselves and their bairn.
>
> The mid-sixties to mid-seventies saw the growth of thousands of new schools across the length and breadth of the U.S. and Canada. The people involved in these schools were, for the most part, completely unaware that people in other places were doing precisely the same as they—beginning independent alternative learning situations. Nor did the

various schools necessarily resemble one another in programs, structures and policies. The only common factor was the founders' disenchantment with conventional schooling and desires to reform education or create completely new structures tuned to the needs of the people being served by them. For the most part, those involved with the new schools were unaware also that, historically, the roots of the new movement lay in the progressive education movement, "fathered" by John Dewey in the early decades of this century. They were very much aware of the current conditions in traditional education, of critics who denounced the status quo and of those who called for humanistic reform—Paul Goodman, John Holt, Carl Rogers, George Dennison, Herb Kohl, Jonathan Kozol, Ivan Illich and others.

Survival was the issue for fledgling schools, many of which lasted less than two years. They existed on a shoestring financially, drawing upon the personal savings of teachers and parents, charging tuition (usually the sole method of assuring income), and fundraising. Some few received corporation or government grants or private foundation money. Most operate in the same way today, for lack of any reliable outside sources of support.

One of the most common complications which prevent "reformist" organizations from accomplishing their aims is that of splintering and spending their institutional energy defining, redefining and arguing with each other over which splinter is the truly representative group. This divisive process seems to me to be rampant in the current life of the Coalition, and to be doing its deadly work as mindlessly as it has throughout the history of such reform groups!

It is almost as though the childlike eagerness of the reformers for recognition by the majority culture which had been held down by the initial religious fervor of innovation and experimentation springs to the fore as the innovations incorporated into the life of the new institutions begin to be taken for granted - by the very fact of their success - and the founding members of these new institutions begin to long for the reward of recognition from the institutional "fathers and mothers" of their native land! And so, like angry, neglected siblings deprived of parental love and acceptance, they begin to wrangle among themselves, looking unconsciously for the scapegoat on whom to lay the blame for their neglect!

It is very distressing to me to see this happening to the Coalition, knowing that it is this very process which prevents its having any decisive role to play in influencing the educational establishment to take alternative education seriously! Of course this "dialectical" process is not new to alternative schooling - years before the Coalition came into being, during the "free school" period, fierce in-fighting was going on - between the east coast city "radicals" like Jonathan Kozol and Larry Cole of LEAPschool and the belly button gazers from California like Michael Rossman and Peter Marin (guess which side I was on!) - both sides operating as though the great American heartland of the middle west didn't even exist!

The Modern School Movement "went down" as a decisive force for reform over a similar kind of controversy. The question as to who was "right" and who "wrong" has since faded into the mists of history. Only the divisions remain. With us currently in the alternative school ranks, it's issues like which schools are real alternatives and which mere facades; whether or not it is good or bad to be "political;" whether most Coalition schools are or are not in some degree compulsory or are truly democratic. With John Holt and some of the other home schoolers it has been a question as to whether *any* school is good for kids! And you can make a darned good case for that argument - as you can for each of them.

The "right" conclusion to be drawn from these controversial statements for me seem to shift with the eloquence and passion of the person formulating the principles involved. Everyone sounds right to me as I read her/his passionate statement! The issues raised by each party in these controversies are eloquent and persuasive. When I read one, I am in agreement with what is being said - until I read another!

Deborah Meier's Central Park East, for example, operates out of a set of rules that would make Dan Greenberg of Sudbury Valley School turn purple! But my surmise is that the school in Manhattan is - or at least, was, as initially organized - a good school in the sense that it *does, or did, very well what it set out to do!* And I *know* that Sudbury Valley has always been - and still is a - magnificent place for children which follows exactly the practice of total adherence to the self-determination which it proclaims as its philosophical basis! So how can anyone decide who or what is *right* - theoretically - for any one school or model of education? I don't know. I don't think you can.

I am, however, making a distinction here between the nature of a school as originally constituted and its subsequent history, because I have a suspicion that the differences that have maintained their pristine integrity and a gradual erosion of that clear image may actually be the core of what Dan Greenberg is waxing so eloquent about in his diatribe against other models of school than the Summerhillian one of total voluntarism. It is my profound belief that the essence of educational value is both far less tangible than many of its practitioners tend to believe and also even more concrete.

Thus, despite our verbal statements on our own behalf, our worth as institutions for children may not lie primarily in the realm of ideology, at all but is still very real and may be sensed by sampling its immediacy, its *Geist*, either by vis-iting, or, less directly, by absorbing its written idiom and "teasing" therefrom its essential character. This intangible process is without guarantees, since its value as a litmus test depends solely on the character and values of the person doing the assessing! But it's all we have, really, and it's the way it perhaps has to be.

The fact is that each school is different, regardless of its ideological formulation: that each reflects the character of the people who run it, and thus each one is likely to be unique. What might be very fine in one school might be a real manipulation in another. Any abstract model can become good or not good depending on the character *and* the relative morale of the people who administer it. This principle - to me - involves *all* settings for childhood learning including home schooling, the "alternatives," public and private schools!

The ways in which each of us manifests our magnificence - and both displays and simultaneously denies displaying - the "shadow" or "underdog" aspects of our complex personalities - has a lot more to do with survival; with the embeddedness of those alternative learning spaces within the matrix - or perhaps the "patrix" might be a more accurate term - of our competitive, cold-hearted, materialistic culture than we choose to notice! It takes a strongly inner-directed (to use David Reisman's term) leader (like A.S. Neill or Dan Greenberg) to set a tone within such an institution that will enable it to maintain its original vision and not either vanish or adapt gradually and inexorably to the standards of the majority establishment that surrounds it.

I personally began my own teaching career in a cowstall classroom in a small, new private school in Texas headmastered by an English Ardingley-Oxford University product whom the kids dubbed "the Headmonster." Four of my five kids got to go there tuition-free, since I was staff. John D. ran it like an English "public" (i.e., boarding) school! My kids loved it, and throve on the rich, paradoxical atmosphere created by John's importing a cadre of other young Englishmen, also graduates of Ardingley, as teachers in his strange, hybrid institution grafted onto the arid Fundamentalistic plains of North Texas.

His school has since lost its wild inspirational tone and become merely another of the "good" private boarding school like Groton or Andover which cater to the rich, but also do a pretty good job of character training for cultural leadership, in social class terms, of American society. Being briefly a part of that èlite yet fascinating world gave me a relative perspective on what actually constitutes "good education" which I could not have acquired from the "outside," I believe. And that perspective seems to me primarily definitional, in one's own terms.

What one believes to be good education, is - for oneself, perhaps even for one's children! - remembering that that last issue is one for the children themselves - and only them - to determine. For me, the "good" school was the one I taught in where so much of the learning environment was serendipitous rather than planned, and came out of its raw newness and the excitement of the unexpectedness that resulted - and from the electric atmosphere created out of the mix between staff and kids - the meeting of English public school and the children of Texas pioneers. But for the families who send their children there now, its current way of operating seems very satisfying, both to parents and to the kids who go there, if their newsletter is any indicator.

By the same token, we can all give a good account of our schools based on impeccable models, and see other schools which follow different models as being bad for children. But believing this to be true doesn't necessarily make it true. Each of us has something of real importance to give the others, it seems to me.

Thus, Dan's being *right* about his school doesn't add up - for me - to all other schools being necessarily *wrong*. It really depends on what people want for their kids. Each learning institution needs to be visited, to be experienced and assessed by the people who are seeking value for their own children in their own terms. We have a huge job to do in the public domain, as the GATE people are saying, and we need to become a lot more clear-headed about what really works for our kids and why it does - and what doesn't, and why not. Monopoly governmental schooling isn't working - at least, as currently defined.

In this context I call most urgently to your attention the article by John Taylor Gatto spelling out the real educational - perhaps *human* would be a better term - problems we face as a society, particularly (but by no means exclusively) as it affects the children of our growing "underclass.' The growing list of excluded minorities whose plight flies so poignantly in the face of our vaunted democracy seems to create most of the "blind spots' we manifest as Americans. The problems Jonathan Kozol keeps reminding us of so passionately yet so patiently (see the review of his book *Rachel and her Children*) have yet to be addressed by most of us, as the environmental crisis is being similarly paid lip service to while we go on arguing over petty details of control and personality! All sides of these issues need to be addressed -and the need to do so is urgent.

What the GATE people (see Ron Miller's and Phil Gang's articles) are saying, among other things, is, WAKE UP!! Our house is on fire!

This no time to fuss among ourselves! We have a great deal to learn about accomplishing our common aims in an effective way. We need also to learn mutual tolerance and appreciation for the excellences we all exhibit! Perhaps the bottom line was written by (of all people!) Chairman Mao when he said, "Let a thousand flowers bloom!" - or by the French saying, "Vive la différence!"

Mary Leue, Editor

PROFILED SCHOOLS:

THE FIRST DAYS OF SHAKER MOUNTAIN SCHOOL IN BURLINGTON, VERMONT

by Jerry Mintz

What follows is a description of the first days of Shaker Mountain School, in September of 1968. During the previous school year I had been a teaching principal in a high school, but had resigned in frustration after philosophical conflicts with the school board. I had been interested in starting a school since college, but had little idea, in those first few days, that I would be directing Shaker Mountain for the next seventeen years.

At our meeting, I asked him where in Vermont his design was being applied. He responded that it was only a design and wasn't being applied yet. "Then what should I do?" I asked, "Start my own store-front school?"

"That would be an excellent idea," he replied.

All well and good, but without any financial backing or organizational support, it all seemed nothing more than a dream, and Scribner never offered either. But he did say that it should be done, and that was a start.

Toward the end of that summer I visited my parents in New York, and while I was there, dropped in on my uncle David Pall, a brilliant engineer and founder of Pall Corporation, which makes fuel filters for jets and rockets, among other things. He became interested in the innovative school ideas I was proposing and said that if I started a school he would be willing to make a contribution of up to $2,000. I filed that offer somewhere in my mind and returned to Vermont.

I wrote a letter to the local superintendent of schools in Burlington proposing a special program that would include the kind of children with special educational needs whom I had been meeting on the streets of Burlington and taking to our summer camp.

For example, one of these children was thirteen-year-old Mike. Other children warned me not to take him out to Starksboro if ever I met up with him, so of course that became one of my goals. Mike hadn't been in school for at least two years, and had been working on his grandfather's rubbish truck. He had also been into a lot of criminal activity, including a break-in to a department store in which guns were stolen. He was scheduled to go to court shortly after I managed to meet him, and certainly on to reform school from there. His father was in prison, and his older brother was in reform school already. I began to bring him to the Starksboro camp, and the kids were right. He was a terror.

The day before public school was to start, I finally received a reply from the Burlington Superintendent. He turned down my proposed program. I thought seriously about leaving the state and getting a teaching job in New York. The first day of public school came and went.

I saw Mike on the street and asked him if he had gone back to school. He said he hadn't but was just waiting to go to court and be sent to Weeks (reform) School. I asked him if he would be willing to have me tutor him and he said yes. Then I called Kimberly Chaney, Assistant Attorney General with the State Department of Education and asked him if Mike would be considered truant if I were tutoring him. He said that the decision was up to the Department of Education and ultimately the Commissioner of Education, Scribner. He would determine whether 'equivalent' education was being given. This encouraged me, since it was Dr. Scribner who had said I should start my own store-front school. Perhaps this would be the beginning. We certainly didn't have much to start with. I had about $30 in the bank, and we had no building, no equipment, no funding.

Nevertheless, I met Mike at his house the next day, and we went over to the Vermont Ecumenical Council where they let us use an office to do some tutoring. We worked until about noon. That first day we just played Password, prepared some science experiments, and did some standardized reading tests. In the afternoon, I taught some tennis. Mike's older brother came along. He had just gotten out of Weeks School. His probation officer had insisted that he go to two weeks of school, but he intended to quit then. Both boys felt that if we could get the school going, they wanted to stick with it all the way.

That evening I wrote a letter to Dr. Scribner. In it, I said, 'When I last spoke to you, you had little to suggest to me concerning where I could teach in an innovative way in the state, except to encourage me to pursue the idea of starting a store-front-type school in Burlington. Well, in a very small way I've started it, but if it is to succeed I am going to need a lot of help."

I continued by outlining my unsuccessful attempt to get help from the Burlington public schools in setting up a program. Then I went on, "Tomorrow night the Burlington Ecumenical Action Ministry meets to consider sponsorship of our project. This is crucial. If we do not get the support of a substantial group of this sort, the going will be tough indeed...

"Of course, we will need some sort of funding. I'm willing to work for expenses for the time being, but these include the maintaining of my house-camp in Starksboro, which will be one of our resources. Another is the cost of transportation. Supplies, equipment and rent may be program costs. The total could be well under $10,000, but it can't be $00. If these is any kind of state or federal help immediately available, it could make the difference between the life or stillborn death of our school. Some private help has been pledged, but it will not be enough to see us through. We're going ahead on faith, and we hope it is sustained."

We met again the next morning and did the same kind of work; some math, some writing, a traffic study, and some more tennis. Mike was one of the most talented tennis students I had ever taught. At the end of the second day, I wrote, "We've gone to BEAM (Burlington Ecumenical Action Ministry) and the Champlain Valley OEO for help, and there appears to be some support in both organizations. But if this project is to be successful, we will need all-out support. At this point, after I pay my most recent bills, I will have no money whatsoever.

Unless something happens very fast, the idea will be dead in two weeks.'

After I'd been tutoring Mike for a day or two, it occurred to me that if we were going to be able to continue and establish a school, that we had to do something about Mike's legal status. I called Patrick Leahy, who was then the Chittenden County State's Attorney and explained to him what I was doing, that I was working on establishing a school, and that I was working with Mike, but that he was scheduled to go to court on the breaking-and-entering charge. Leahy, in a move which underlines the courage which he has exhibited as a public official from that time on, told me that he would hold the charges against Mike and wait to see how we did with him, and that if we were successful, he would eventually drop these charges, serious as they were, (involving the theft of arms).

We continued to meet for the rest of the week. At the end of the week our official student population doubled: Mike's uncle Larry (age 14) joined us. He had missed just about as much school as Mike, yet the public school people apparently became quite upset when Larry's mother called and told them he was going to "Mintz's school."

Larry talked about some of his problems when he first came to the school. "My main problem is my mother and father. They are always fuckin' fighting. How can I learn if I don't get no fuckin' sleep all night? My mother wakes him up yelling 'you no-good baldheaded prick.' Think you could take it for eleven years? As long as I can remember. Not much I can do about it.

Can't say 'Stop fighting!' What good would that do? Goes in one ear and out the other. I want to study about California, because my aunt lives there. She's the oldest one and looks the best. I don't think she ever had a breakdown. Oh, I'll probably end up living with my father."

During those first weeks we met wherever we could. We met at the old fire station on Church Street, at an artist's loft on College Street, and we spent a lot of time going places in my old Plymouth sedan. In fact, we thought about calling ourselves "The Plymouth School." Thinking back about those first few days, it is apparent to me that some very important precedents were set, some of them simply through expedience. For example, when I thought about starting a school, I had always imagined that it would be in a rural location and a farm situation, something parallel to Lewis-Wadhams School (a "Summerhillian" boarding school started by Herb Snitzer in the Adirondacks between the little towns of Lewis and Wadhams) following his return to this country from teaching for a number of years at Summerhill in England), but when I first started tutoring Mike, that was an impossibility. I was in no position to set up a boarding school. I was in no position to set up a day school. But coming into Burlington and tutoring and working with Mike and Larry in the city led to Shaker Mountain eventually trying to incorporate the bet of both worlds. From that point on, Shaker Mountain School has always been in the city with its boarding location in the country, in Starksboro. In the end we discovered that by doing it this way the students do not get cut off from their home environment, and even out-of-state students do not suffer from a sense of isolation or exhibit the paranoia that I have seen at other alternative schools that are located in purely rural settings.

Another early concept of the school was that it was not to be an elitist school. In the very first weeks, I wrote,

> Although it is apparent that the public schools are unwilling to sponsor this project this year, I would still hope to retain the one great advantage that would come from public school sponsorship - that any interested and needy student be able to participate, regardless of family income. This is why independent funding is so important. Obviously, no student would be turned down because of no ability to pay, but I want this school to start from the opposite end of the spectrum, for once.

I wrote a report on the status of the school after two weeks of operation. In it I said,

> At this point we have two full-time students and two part-time students who are still attending school (public) while details for their release can be worked out. School has been held every day but one (when we saw the Commissioner of Education in Montpelier), and no days have been missed by any of the students.
>
> Much of the two weeks has been spent traveling to places of interest. Most recently, we traveled to Proctor, Vermont, to witness the opening of a unique sculptural exhibit at the marble quarry. On the way down, we stopped at the Morgan Horse Farm of the University of Vermont in Middlebury. Previous to that excursion, we visited the UVM poultry farm to plan an egg-hatching project.
>
> In addition we have spent two days with Peter Laffin at his metal shop in Huntington Center. He taught some of the students how to make metal sculptures on his blacksmith hearth. We spent some time cutting wood with him, getting some experience in that area and also earning some money for the school.
>
> There was one major conflict while we were using the old police station for our base. One of the students

used a stove to cook some eggs that were there, neither of which he was supposed to (he had said he had permission). When confronted, he became very upset. But the next day he brought some eggs to replace the ones he used (they had belonged to the Cooking Club), and everyone was happy. The story is a bit more complicated than that, but at any rate, it was a good lesson in freedom versus license.

We did traffic counts to introduce the area of mathematics and eventually spent most of a day doing modern math, getting to surprisingly complex levels, considering their previous school performances. They just kept on asking for more and more complicated problems.

We introduced history and art in the Williston graveyard, doing some remarkably good grave rubbings. They were good enough for a UVM student to sell orders for $15 of $20-worth, so we understand. And if the students want to do more, it could be a good money-making project for the school.

Concerning money, a total of $18 has been given by parents and the students themselves, and a total of $44 has been raised by the Concerned Students and Faculty at the University of Vermont. One student from the same group spent some if one morning answering questions that the students had raised about racing cars. Another has volunteered to teach them guitar. Our students met him when I brought them to a coffee shop on campus that features outstanding musicians.

One day I gave the students a test which asked questions about the gestation period of a chicken egg, the amount of wood in a cord, the function of a carburetor, and the average amount of traffic passing a given corner in Burlington in a given amount of time. They got all the questions right. They enjoyed their success and requested more tests so that they could prove to themselves and their parents that they were learning something.

George Zeitz, a local artist, has offered us his studio for use as a base location, and has volunteered to teach art for a couple of hours a week if we wish. The room is on College Street, is lit well, with a rest room, and is used only once a week. It will make a good temporary location.

> More than half a dozen students have asked to be admitted into the school. One is on probation and cannot be officially admitted until the red tape is cut, although he has joined us after school. He gets out at about noon. He came with us to Proctor and to the camp in Starksboro afterwards, making, as he noted, an incredible 30 straight hours of school for him. He didn't seem to mind it. But we are going to have to put off admission of the other students until we get a more permanent headquarters and a better financial base. This disturbs me, since the situation seems so urgent in some of the cases.
>
> Overall, I am pleased with our modest beginnings. Lately, my days seem to begin just as soon as they're over, but in the long run I think the effort will be worth it.

During the first month, we never did find a permanent building. We met wherever we could. We raised a total of $97 and spent $120. I simply didn't pay any of my personal bills because I didn't have the money to do so. I didn't want to rent out my base in Starksboro because I thought that eventually it would become a resource for the school. During the entire first month, none of the students missed even a day of school. This was particularly significant since the kids we were starting with had been chronic truants. One of the things the kids liked most was doing the grave rubbings. As one of the kids wrote,

> You take a thin piece of paper and you tape it to the gravestone. Then you rub it with a crayon or a carpenter's pencil. You can do it in many different colors, any way you want it to come out. We do only the real old ones because they are all hand carved. While we were out there we took a picture of Thomas Chittenden. He was the first governor of Vermont. His son is buried there in the graveyard in Williston.

We took some of the early grave rubbings we did and sold them. We actually auctioned them off at a coffee house at the University of Vermont, and this is how we raised some of our first funds. It was very exciting to the students because they were actually seeing the product of their work be given some value and this was very significant to them. Within that short period of time these formerly cynical, rather embittered children were opening up to learning things. For example, one of them said,

> I want to learn more about cars, math, science. I want to do experiments. I want to learn about the sun, moon, Mars, the stars, all that stuff. I want to learn to write better, geography, how the world was created, and how it might end.

During the first few months, we did a lot of traveling in my old Plymouth sedan. We even considered calling the school the Plymouth School.

Apparently local officials were spending a fair amount of time trying to track us down. They would, for example, go into the old police station which was one of our off-and-on meeting places and say in loud voices, "Where's Mintz's school?" And the people would point out the door and say, "They went thattaway." This went on for a month to six weeks, and they never did find us. We were too quick for them.

We were in contact with the Commissioner of Education (Dr. Harvey Scribner) and the attorney for the Education Department, Kimberly Chaney, during this time, and they indicated that our legal status was in a kind of grey area, but that they would give us some support, even though the local school officials seemed quite upset.

We eventually had our first Board of Trustees meeting. At that meeting we set the precedent of having half the members of the board be students of the school. At that point it was all three of the official full-time students, Mike, Larry and Donny. We decided to employ Dr. Scribner's idea of having on the board of trustees only those people whom we could *trust*, rather than people who we thought could provide us with a lot of money. Thus a very important decision for the school's future was being made. It was a decision that kept the school unified, spiritually solid - and financially poor.

After six weeks of operation, we decided to rent a small, former grocery store at 86 Pitkin Street in Burlington for use as our base location. The rent was $60 a month. With a great deal of excitement and enthusiasm, we moved in and began to fix the place up. I set up my office in the walk-in cooler, and I even had a phone put in there.

A few days later, the officials from the school department finally caught up with us. One morning, as we were quietly working in the building on Pitkin Street, three large men burst into the store and stood there, side by side. These included assistant superintendents and other important school officials. It looked as though the Mafia had just attacked. One of them yelled in a loud, threatening voice, "Don't you students all know you are truant?"

For a moment, the kids were paralyzed with fear. They just stared back, not knowing what to say. But I was prepared for the invaders. As they stood there menacingly, I pulled out a letter from the Assistant Attorney General, Kimberly Chaney, and read it to them.

The letter said in part,

> Because confusion has arisen in this case relating to the meaning of truancy, and the procedures for determining whether or not a child is truant, I would like to take this opportunity to advise you concerning the legal status of the pupils you are now tutoring. Our statute 16 V.S.A. 1126 requires a teacher to notify the superintendent or school directors, and the truant officer, that a student who was enrolled in the public school has failed to attend. Under 16 V.S.A. 1127(a), a truant officer who receives a notice required to be given under 16 V.S.A. 1126 is required to inquire into the cause of the child's absence and if he finds that 'the child is absent without cause' he is required to give written notice of that fact to the parent of the child. This is because a parent has a statutory right either to enroll the child in the public school or in an educational program which the Department of Education determines is equivalent to that provided in the public school. 16 V.S.A. 1121. Thus, where a claim is made that a child is receiving equivalent education a finding of truancy would depend on the prior determination of the equivalency question by the Commissioner of Education. Since that determination has not been made in this case by the Commissioner, it would be my opinion that the children you are presently tutoring should not be regarded as legally truant and that therefore it would be premature to bring a formal truancy complaint against a parent at this time.

The three school officials read Kim Chaney's letter very carefully and did a slow burn. Finally they looked up, looked around and left in disgust. We'd won our first legal battle.

Chaney eventually became Vermont State's Attorney.

Jerry Mintz founded Shaker Mountain School in Burlington, Vermont, in 1968, at the age of twenty-five. He was headmaster of the school from that time through 1985. For his work he received the governor's (of Vermont) award for outstanding service to youth.

Jerry helped the Mohawk Indians start the first Indian Way School in 1971, when traditionalist Mohawks wanted an alternative school. This school is still running, and has given rise to the North American Indian Survival School movement, and in particular to The Survival School, in Canada, which is now six years old, with the majority of high school age students from the reservation attending. The school is entirely Mohawk-run, with funds coming from the Canadian government.

Jerry Mintz was elected to the national board of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools in 1982. Two years later, he was elected vice-president, and the following year the Coalition named him as their first executive director. Currently, he is free-lancing both as an alternative consultant and editor of ***AEROGRAMME***, his networking newsletter.

SUDBURY VALLEY SCHOOL

Photographs courtesy of Dan Greenberg

SUBTLETIES OF A DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL

by Daniel Greenberg

Certain nuances in the operation of the school [Sudbury Valley School] have emerged during the years we have been in existence that turn out to be very important in defining the school. Recently, someone gave me a book to read about an alternative school that appeared to him to be very similar to what we are doing.

I read the material I have been given, and my first reaction was one of horror, because I found the school described in the book so very different from us that I could not imagine how the person who gave it to me had ever though it was similar. Determined to get to the bottom of the matter, I reread the book and then the answer came to me. So much of the terminology was similar to the terminology that we use, that if you didn't have experience in understanding the subtleties of our school, you could easily get fooled into thinking that the other school was the same. The language was similar; the vocabulary was similar. It took very close reading to see how fundamentally different the two schools were. The more I thought about it the more I became convinced that this whole question is tied up with enrollment too, because I think that the better we are recognized for what we are, the more likely it is that the people who enroll here will really want what we are offering.

One of the key strengths of our school is that it relates in a very profound way to American tradition and experience. In *The Crisis in American Education* we talk about this in general terms, but I think there is a lot more to be said on that subject. In many subtle ways this school tunes in on deep American vibrations from the past. To the extent that people are going to be hunting around for ways to give their lives meaning within the context of the American tradition, these subtleties must be clarified and pointed out, so that our role in this society will become clear. We tap very deep currents in the American tradition, and this is a source of real strength for us, because it links us ultimately with the fate and future of the country as a whole.

I have five items to discuss. In each case, I will define the item, tell why I think it is important to our school, and then compare the situation in other schools.

Item 1: Political Neutrality

Ours is an apolitical school. It is a school in which we consciously do not pay attention to the political views of the people who seek to become members of the community, where by "political" I mean the standard sense of the term, in its broadest implication. We don't ask about party affiliations, about philosophy, about class, about any of the features that separate political factions in a society. We don't ask about these things, we don't test for them in an indirect way, we don't try to find out about them in a back-handed manner. In addition, we don't allow political activity to take place on the campus. In plain language, we don't allow the school in any way to become involved in political activities in the community.

We maintain a very rigorous political neutrality, something that has been put to the test many times. For example, in the beginning, when we first opened, it was simply assumed by members of the so-called "Movement" that we were another "Movement" institution. If we happened to encounter anybody who was involved in the Movement, we would be greeted as "brothers." We would be asked such things as, "When are you planning to have your next rally?" We were approached by people in the community to use the building in support of an election campaign. It was assumed that any "brother" from any part of the country could come and camp out at the school. This was a widespread assumption. When it became clear that regardless of the private political views of the people concerned with the school, the school itself was going to maintain an absolutely rigid political neutrality from the beginning -- and this became clear very quickly -- we came to be considered enemies of the Movement, and in the Movement literature we were singled out for special ridicule and contempt for our non-political behavior. Finally, we were simply eliminated from the Movement literature.

Unfortunately there was a spill-over to the community at large. I think that a lot of the parents in '68 had heard about the school through political connections, and they made the same assumptions. I think that contributed to some of our problems that year, when they found out that we weren't what they expected. We had other interesting tests of our political neutrality. For example, there were many times when students (it was particularly students, because I think the staff had worked this out, and understood it very well) wanted to have some kind of participation in peace rallies in '68 and thought the school should be involved. Later, there was "Moratorium Day" in October 1969. There was a certain amount of discussion on whether the school should be closed, because everybody was closing. In this connection, it was instructive to see how quickly the concept of political neutrality came to be accepted here. It was really extremely interesting to see that the strongest activists, the people who felt most strongly about their views, simply dropped any attempt to politicize the school, and their arms didn't have to be twisted in any way. They really accepted it once it was explained to them.

Why is it so important? And why did they realize it was important? The reason is embedded deep in the American political spirit, in the idea that people of divergent political and social views can work together in a common enterprise where they have common goals other than politics. This is a deep and uniquely American idea. You don't have to see eye to eye with all your co-workers in order to create a valid enterprise. To be sure, where political issues are concerned, you can seek out your political friends and fight with your political enemies. But an extremely important tradition in this country is that when other matters of concern are at hand, other things that are not inherently political by nature, you don't pay attention to political differences; all people can join hands in the enterprise. This feature was built into the public school system here, a system of education that is an original American conception. One of the cardinal features of our public schools was that all people, belonging to all religions, having all political views, coming from all classes of society, would come together for the educational enterprise. In its essence, education was a search for knowledge, and any view was to be subjected to scrutiny.

That's the ideal. It may not always have turned out that way in practice. But I don't think it is too important to look at the defects of the American public school system in practice, for the purposes of this discussion. I think the ideal is really clear; it is spelled out over and over again in the American public school literature. The tradition of public education is that in such a noble enterprise as the search for knowledge, truth, enlightenment, everybody can work together.

I do believe very strongly that this is an important feature of our school. Anyone who knows personally some of the people associated with the school knows that the school community spans an extraordinary divergence of political views, and this has not been a barrier to working together. The main point is that nobody need feel uncomfortable in the school, regardless of his political views. Everyone has full freedom to express his views and to hear others, and no one is ever made to feel 'square' or an outsider because he holds views that may be in a minority on the political scene.

As I just said, the public school system is closest to us in this respect. By contrast, alternative schools -- the so-called 'free schools' -- are virtually all identified with specific political movements. Every alternative school that I know about has stressed the political nature of its program. Sometimes this may not be evident because of their use of language. 'Politics' has become a dirty word, and so it has become very modern to hide the fact that what they are doing is political. They prefer to call themselves non-political even when they are doing political things, and as a result it becomes hard to spot the politics in their literature.

I think you will find time and time again that groups will try to hide the political nature of what they are doing by couching their work in moral terms, by referring to grander over-arching aims that don't show the political reality that they really are. That's why when you read the literature of an alternative school you have to read it carefully.

For example, you may find a school catalog that doesn't have a single word about politics in it, but you find that the things they stress are ecology, organic foods, a certain approach to the body, a certain approach to the sexes, towards family life - all of the things that virtually constitute a political program for the organization of a community and a way of life. Their little brochures can be three pages long, but that is long enough for you to find out that their school is being set up by a group with a very focussed political program -- even though the word 'politics' never appears. And of course the 'insiders' know it. It's only the casual readers who are duped. It's like a code. Often they come here on a visitor's day and one of the first things they ask is, 'How many people do you get studying ecology?' That's a code word -- they're not really interested in our curriculum, but they want to identify quickly whether we are "with it" or not.

Some schools are more overt, and say point blank that they are interested in people having certain specific political views, and that they carefully screen applicants and staff members to make sure they get politically pure people in their community. They say it in so many words. But for the most part, this is pretty well camouflaged in the literature of alternative schools, and you can pick it up only by reading carefully and asking yourself, "Is this literature a code for a certain community structure that these people are advocating or isn't it?" Put our literature to that test, and you will see that it is all clearly politically neutral. You simply cannot put your finger on a program of specific community action in our school writings.

So probably the most blatant difference between our school and alternative schools started by other groups is that the alternative schools are virtually all connected to some political movement. You should not take what I am saying to be antagonistic towards other alternative schools. I'm simply trying to point out a difference. I think it is perfectly legitimate for any group to set up its own educational institution if it wants to. I'm not at all opposed to that idea; in fact, I think it is part of our pluralistic scene. I think political schools play the same role in the political sector as parochial schools play in the religious sector. There is nothing wrong with the idea that people who have strong religious convictions should want to set up a school where those convictions dominate. I don't have anything against any group, right, left, or center, saying they would like a politically pure school because they have an ideal they want to nurture in a pure environment. My only concern is to make sure that people understand what they are going into; that people don't think they are getting one thing when they are in fact getting another. We don't want people coming to this school thinking it is a "Movement" school and then be disappointed that we let in all these right-wing "creeps." And I don't want people going to an alternative school thinking they are in an apolitical situation, when in fact they are getting indoctrinated, which I think happens much of the time.

Item 2: The Existence of Rules of Order

We have always thought it important to have official meetings of any group in the school operate according to some set of explicit, formal procedures. I don't attach any importance to Roberts' Rules in particular. It makes no difference if they are Roberts' Rules, Congressional Rules, Sudbury Valley Rules or any other set of rules. What is important is that we've always run our meetings according to strict rules of order.

This contrasts to the usual way meetings are held, where somebody runs the meeting; I call that authoritarian model, and I think that is the most prevalent model. Somebody determines what is going to be discussed, who will talk when, when the discussion will be terminated, and how the decision will be made -- if he doesn't make the decision himself. This is the standard pattern of faculty meetings, religious groups, and so forth. There is somebody with power who does things in the way he thinks is right. Every now and then a person may complain, and some compromises may be made, but that's the way it runs.

A second model that has become more avant-garde today, more "with it," more accepted by the "in" groups, is the extreme opposite of the authoritarian model, but similar to it in essence. This model is dominated by the mood of the group rather than the mood of an authority figure. It's a group meeting, a "togetherness" experience; there is the idea that everything is done by consensus: "We will all get together, and as long as there is disagreement, we are going to talk it over, to get a real meeting of minds, until the whole thing is really together." The idea is the same as the authoritarian model in essence, because it's governed by an arbitrariness, except that this is the arbitrariness of the whole group spirit rather than of an individual. There doesn't necessarily have to be continuity from one day to another, or from one hour to another; it is something that is governed by the spirit of the occasion. Generally speaking, ever since the encounter-group mania that swept the country in the mid-sixties, it has become very "in" to think that it's a good thing to have meetings run that way, by group consensus, better than having one authority run it. I don't really know why this has happened. I think I would personally ascribe it to the general decline of individualism in this country, to the flight from individual expression and strength and submergence in a group as a substitute. This approach has taken hold all over, even in corporations, where you would never have expected it. They don't make decisions the way they used to; instead, they get

School meeting at Sudbury Valley School

people together out in the country for a few days, and give them some sort of tremendous experience, the idea being that some kind of a strong bond will be formed that will be the basis for making decisions.

Both the authoritarian types and the group types view the kinds of meetings we have in the Sudbury Valley School with disdain. The idea that decision-making should take place according to some formal set of explicit procedures is repugnant to both sides. The reason this is so is related to what we talked about in item #1. The chief function of rules of order is to protect all views and to give them as detached and thorough an airing as possible. Rules constitute the main protection for reason, intellect, objectivity, and detachment in a group context, as opposed to feeling and emotion. This is because rules ritualize the equality of all views and all people. That is at the heart of rules of order. They are set up specifically to equalize any view; they make it possible for anybody to use the meeting, to introduce a motion, to get the floor. They protect a speaker from being shouted down, they prevent an outburst of emotion on the floor, they protect a debate, they prevent a personal argument between two people that will bring out emotional antagonisms rather than reasoned arguments. That's their chief aim. As with every other aim, you don't always succeed in attaining it. There is always a way to violate the spirit of the rules. Nothing on paper every protects you totally. So some views can be shut out eventually if they get on people's nerves enough. There is no absolute protection. But the trend is unmistakable: to guarantee the rule of reason through rules of order. This is why this item is related to the previous one. In a situation where you are looking for political sameness, there is nothing more repugnant than a minority view; that's just a pain in the neck. The idea that you actually protect equal exposure of all views is something that these people just don't want. Wherever one wants ideological purity, one doesn't want to guarantee equal exposure to all views. But in an apolitical institution like this school, such protection has become important to us.

That's why rules of order have survived repeated onslaughts in the school. No sooner were rules of order announced and they were attacked in the summer of '68, and often again in the fall of '68. People complained bitterly about the formality of the School Meeting. A good deal later there was again a feeling of dissatisfaction about the way the School Meeting was run - dissatisfaction that again focussed on the formality of the rules; and we actually set up a special committee to study the functions of the School Meeting and make recommendations for changes. Anybody who had complaints about the School Meeting could come forward; and there were some changes made in the procedure as a result of this committee's work. But the basic form was preserved, even though there were certain people who felt that we just shouldn't have rules, that people should be able to say whatever they wanted, and we should be able to make major decisions right on the floor. earlier in '68 they said it a little more bluntly -- that the meeting should be a 'happening.' But in fact the school's basic attitude toward rules of order has been reaffirmed over and over again by an overwhelming majority of the School Meeting membership, until by now it is not an issue at all.

In fact, the more people have come to realize the significance of their rules, the more they have taken advantage of them. The School Meeting *Record* will show, for example, that as time has passed a greater diversity of people introduce motions. More people are coming to feel that they have access to the political process. It is the existence of a clear, explicit procedure that protects and encourages them in doing this. You can see it when you talk to students at the school, even the littlest kids: "We want to have a field trip and we have to go to the School Meeting and introduce a motion for it." It's a beautiful equalizer. They don't say, "We have to ask staff member A to arrange it for us." They don't look to an authority, and they don't say, "We have to get everybody in the school community to agree that it is a good thing." They realize that the way the procedures are set up in the school, every citizen of the school community has equal access in presenting what he wants to the source of power, the democratic School Meeting. Anybody who has been at a School Meeting cannot fail to notice that political "power blocks" use this access regularly. A block will show up when something of special interest is on the floor. A group of people troops in for a motion, and troops out later; all ages, not necessarily little or middle or anything, but very well focussed, knowing exactly what they are doing.

I think it is perfectly self-evident how this fits into the

American tradition. The establishment of rules was a very conscious effort on the part of the founders of the country when they set up the first legislatures, both in the states and in the federal government. We have records of debates and discussions on the rules of order in Congress, and on the functions that these were to serve - in particular, to protect the rational quality of the discussion.

I think you'll find this concept missing from most other schools. Traditional schools are almost totally run on the authoritarian model. Alternative schools, interestingly enough, are about equally divided. Many are run by a charismatic leading figure. Others are run as a continuing encounter group. I wouldn't be surprised if this single feature alone accounts for the high failure rate of so many alternative schools. They just didn't have good procedures for making decisions. They didn't have the decision-making capability to air all the views and consider all the options necessary to their survival. So when the crunch came, they just gave up the ghost.

Item 3: The Rule of Law

This resembles the previous item in many respects. By 'rule of law' I mean the existence of explicit, published rules governing the community, and the existence of a rational means for arriving at such rules. The previous item was limited to the procedures of the governing body; this item refers to the actual laws governing individuals and the community as a whole. Conceptually, there is much in common between items #2 and #3.

The rule of law is generally acknowledged to be a cornerstone of orderly, organized society. In our school, laws are always promulgated in writing, and careful records are kept of the body of precedents surrounding each rule. There is a simple process for the adoption of new laws and repeal of old, obsolete laws - a democratic process accessible to all members of the community. There is no opening, however small, for arbitrary or capricious authority to step in.

The public schools remain one of the last bastions of autocratic rule in our society. Power generally resides in the principal, sometimes elsewhere; it is not important to locate where it is, only to note its autocratic nature. There is in fact no rule of law. It is interesting how the public schools have become sensitive to this defect. There is a lot of agitation on the part of various community groups to institute in public schools some of the protections afforded by rule of law. Usually, the schools respond by starting to promulgate sets of rules and regulations, to give the appearance that they're acceding to this demand. This process first started in higher education in the late sixties, and has slowly filtered its way down to the high schools, but rarely lower. What I find so fundamentally dangerous about this trend is that it is basically a fraud, because at no time does the absolute source of power give up its right to change the rules at will. The rules that hold today can be replaced by a new set tomorrow. The community is getting the external impression that there is a clear set of fair rules, whereas in fact the real power remains where it was before. I guess there are always some people who will say that this is a step in the right direction, but I've always felt that in a situation like this the "step in the right direction" is in fact a step in the wrong direction, because it is meant to pull the wool over the eyes of the public and make them think there is real protection, in order to deflect criticism.

What is perhaps more surprising is that, by and large, alternative schools do not believe in the rule of law either. They too operate in an atmosphere of arbitrary rules that usually emanate not from a single power figure, like a principal, but from some rule-making body operating without regular rules of order (see item #2). There is a constant shifting of sands in these alternative schools, depending on the mood of the population each week.

We had tremendous pressure on us in the summer of '68 when we first opened, not to codify our rules, since "next week we could get together and change them," as many people said. These were real issues in the school; there were groups who argued vehemently that we shouldn't have written rules. "We want to be able to modify things as the spirit moves us." The first time we mimeographed a collection of the rules passed by the School Meeting was at the end of August 1968, and that very act of mimeographing was a stand on this issue. It meant that a code of law was being developed, and it also meant that we considered the School Meeting to be a continuing legislative body, so that we didn't have to start all over making new rules each year. The promulgation of the August 1968 code of School Meeting Resolutions meant that the results of the summer of '68 were not going to be for the summer only, but for the future as well, until duly modified.

In alternative schools, power resides in the momentary whim of the majority at a given instant. This is part of a conscious effort by the majority to make sure that the minority will always shift with the majority. Alternative schools are often open about this; they want to submerge the individuality of each member in the community. This is usually explicit in the literature of these schools - that they hold the unity of the community to be of prime value and to take precedence over everything else. So they will usually undermine any attempt to institute the rule of law, since that would tend to make an individual feel secure and protect him when he chooses to stand apart.

Item 4: Universal Suffrage

This is the idea that everybody, every citizen has a vote. It is really a simple idea. The American experience has been an inexorable march toward universal suffrage, which hasn't stopped yet. This has been a root trend in American democracy. In the early days, voting used to be subject to all sorts of race and property and age requirements. Slowly, unpropertied males, then blacks, then the females were added, and recently the age has been reduced to eighteen: and once the age is reduced to eighteen, it's just a matter of time before people start asking why it shouldn't be sixteen or lower. It is clear that there is a constant movement in the direction of universality.

There is a real difference between a democratic society that believes in universal suffrage and one that doesn't. This difference reflects itself in the whole society in all of its functions. For example, Athenian society was a pure democracy for Athenian male freemen, of whom there were several thousand; and it was based on a large substructure of enslaved subjugated peoples and also on a smaller substratum of women, who were not slaves, but were second class citizens. Don't think there was anything unstable about this. It was quite stable, it lasted a long time. The only reason this ever went under, really, was because there were stronger empires around who defeated the Athenians at war; but as far as their internal structure was concerned, it was quite stable. The fact that there wasn't universal suffrage meant that elitism was an inherent part of the Athenian world view, which held that there was a privileged segment of society, and the rest of society was there to serve them. This went to the heart of the Greek world view, as can be seen, for example, in Plato and Aristotle. Even after Greek democracy disappeared, that idea remained part of Western culture right up to modern times. Elitism allows for democracy within the privileged group, but this doesn't do any good for the rest of the citizens. I think this trend of privileged democracy, which is so different from the egalitarianism of universal suffrage, is evident right up to the present day. Communist countries often use the word "democracy" honestly, reflecting a genuine belief that there ought to be democratic procedures within an elite - which in their case is the party, the political elite of the proletariat. What I am saying is simply that they do use the word "democratic" in a sense that has a long history in our culture. The American idea, by contrast, is egalitarian.

Universal suffrage was built into the school from the beginning. We always felt that every single person who is part of the community has to have a say in it one way or another. We changed our views on exactly how much of a say any segment should have, and exactly where this should be expressed. Much depended on how much we felt we could get away with. In the beginning, we didn't think we could get away with the School Meeting making financial decisions, because our legal advisors worried that such an arrangement wouldn't stand up contractually in court. But the trend in school was always clear. Our view was always that everybody in the school, aged four and up, should have an equal access to power. Today, we have reached that state.

If we contrast the situation in other schools, we see again that there have been interesting trends at various levels towards extending the suffrage to a certain extent. But if we look closely, we will see the true state of affairs more clearly. Let's focus briefly on higher education, which I think is the best example. There was a tremendous amount of hoopla in higher education, especially back in the sixties, about democratizing the universities. This was part of the agitation on campuses. There was much talk of spreading the decision-making power. But when it was all over, who got any real new power? The answer is only the faculty. In no case that I know of did any real power go to the students. Even when students were put on Boards of Trustees, the number allowed to serve was strictly limited.

Sudbury Valley's magnificent setting in Framingham, Massachusetts - worthy occupant-successor on the historic Nathaniel Bowditch estate

Imagine if we had in our by-laws that there should be fifteen trustees, of whom no more than three should be students, no more than three parents, etc., etc., and you'll see the contrast right away. Our Board of Trustees is a board of Assembly members, period; anybody can become a trustee. We can have an entire Board of outsiders, or of staff members, or students, or anything. Whereas in the universities they made it look like they were doing something to distribute the power, but they really were going to keep it where it was all along. I'm not saying there was no concession made. Real concessions were made within the elite, to the faculty. This is just what I'm talking about, that the idea of democracy as it is sold in Academia, in the heart of our educational system, is a Greek one: democracy is for the privileged. Time and time again, if you talk to faculty members, they'll confuse the issues very nicely. They'll say, "There's no equality, I know more about biology than my students. I know more, and I should have more to say about it." And they say this quickly so nobody should see that they're confusing the issue of with the issue of*political power*, which of course are two very different issues. The contrast to our school is instructive.

Item 5: Protecting the Rights of Individuals

This school has a strong tradition that there exist rights belonging to every individual member of the school community, and that these have to be protected in every way possible. For example, consider the right of privacy. This right is not something you can codify legally, it's not a rule that has been passed; it is just something inherent in the school. It is one of the individual rights we protect in this school. Because of this right we do not have any kind of intervention in the private affairs of students - intervention that characterizes other schools. There isn't anything against it in our by-laws or rules, it's just part of our tradition to shy away from that kind of activity. If we do intervene, there is an enormous burden on the school to justify it, before we can do it.

The idea of protecting the rights of individuals is an essential part of American culture. This is not an absolute concept; it's a much more subtle one, that involves a great deal of judgment. Which rights, how far they go, where the boundary line is drawn between individual and community these are all things that have to be decided and worried about day in, day out, year in, year out. That's why this idea is on my list of subtleties, because it's not something where you just draw a line and say, "These are absolute rights." Where the line is drawn between community interest and private interest is a matter of constant judgment.

The vast majority of national experiences in the history of man have not recognized the idea of individual rights as paramount in importance. Wherever the transition from a loose family or tribal units to national units took place, it involved a tremendous shifting of emphasis to the group, an emphasis which had to put an enormous value on the group in order to keep it together. There is nothing "natural" about forming a nation. Perhaps there is something natural about forming small groups, but a nation is a large conglomerate that does not hold together simply by blood ties or by friendship; it is held together by some sort of Idea, and apparently the only way this can happen is through tremendous pressure on the individuals in a nation to give up their individuality and subject themselves to the Idea. So that formation of nations and states required shifting values towards community, and this went far towards downgrading the idea of the individual.

Contrast that with what went on in this country in the late '60's and early '70's, a situation which is inconceivable in any setting other than the American one. It is simply staggering that you can have a country at war, and right through that war people will go on with significant protests that are demoralizing and disruptive - and be protected by the courts and legislatures and even by the government they are attacking. Even in the worst crises, we have hardly ever sacrificed our individual rights. For exceptions, one has to think back to a horrible autocrat like Abraham Lincoln...who abolished the *habeus corpus* during the Civil War. Even during the Second World War, when a tremendous panic and sense of insecurity swept the country because we were totally unprepared for any sort of military struggle, the internment of the Japanese on the West Coast raised a tremendous uproar of protest. The American attitude towards individual rights has no parallel in history. Which rights are protected, and how far, all this is subject to debate; but the fact that they exist and are worthy of protection is a sacred principle.

A democratic school that is rooted in the American tradition has to have that feature too. It is not necessary for me to talk about other schools at length, because the rights of people in schools are just simply not respected, even if there is occasional lip service paid to this. In public schools, this is true for teachers and administrators, as well as being true - and well-known - for students. Furthermore, the idea of individual rights is absent from alternative schools for reasons that I have spelled out several times, because alternative schools are primarily committed to the community idea.

Five subtleties, all essential to defining the particular character of the Sudbury Valley School, and marking clearly its place in the history of American Education.

Dan and his wife Hanna Greenberg were both in academic science! she a PhD. from Columbia in Biochemistry, doing post-doctoral research at M.I.T.; I, a PhD. from Columbia in Physics, having taught Physics and History of Science at Columbia, then going into academic publishing, editing and writing. By 1967 they and several others had come to the conclusion that they wanted to devote our lives to a radical restructuring of education. Sudbury Valley School was the result. It opened in 1968, for children ages 4-19 (and occasional adults).

Since that time the school has grown steadily, topping 100 students for the first time in 1986. They have never been short of devoted staff - there are 14 now, 6 of whom have been here since the beginning. The tuition is kept at a ridiculously low level so that "anyone" can come - and anyone does. They have open admissions, and do not look at or care about prior school records.

Hanna and Dan have three children: Michael, an art photographer living in Chicago; Talya, a graduate from Wesleyan; and David. None of the three ever attended any other school than S.V.S.

METROPOLITAN SCHOOL OF COLUMBUS: A Twenty Year Perspective on Alternative Schools From One Person's Experience

by Lucia Vorys

It's difficult now, twenty years later, to remember the crisis proportions of the unrest that was sweeping the country during the late 60's and early 70's out of which the alternative school movement, as well as other grass-roots movements, was born. It was like the pre-Civil War years in intensity and, like them, the cause was oppression - oppression of blacks by whites, and, one hundred years later, of women by men, of children by adults, of students by administrators, of doves by hawks, of the poor by the rich - in fact, of the powerless by the powerful. In 1968 Martin Luther King, black champion of human rights, was assassinated. Two months later, Senator Bobby Kennedy, like his older brother before him a symbol of idealism in our national government, was also assassinated.

On the local scene, Ohio State University was surrounded by a ring of National Guard soldiers through which my oldest daughter, a freshman in 1970, had to walk each day. Outside in the campus parking lot her tires were slashed. She and her classmates were tear-gassed when they joined a protest march in Washington, D.C. against the Viet Nam war. I'll never forget the hurt look in her innocent eyes when she confessed to me, "I don't even understand what this is all about."

Even within our family the sides of civil war were being painfully drawn. My husband, the father of our four children, was a prominent lawyer in a prominent firm, a sought-after member of the power structure of the capital city of Ohio. I, on the other hand, having been trained in a wealthy establishment family and in the finest schools to serve the power structure without question, was now waking up to the need for radical changes in the system because our children were caught as very questioning teenagers in the throes of these times. Through a number of rude awakenings as I experienced the stifling limitations of the educational system not only as a parent but as a teacher, I realized that educational change was my calling. So amid, and because of, all these disturbances, in 1969 the first alternative school in central Ohio, Metropolitan School of Columbus, was conceived. I was the first to voice its purpose but was joined instantaneously by supporters from various segments of the city's population who were similarly inspired and determined.

Our first brochure stated the goals of the school:

> 1) ...to provide an educational atmosphere conducive to the fullest development of each student's creativity, expressiveness, sensitivity, curiosity, independence, judgment, and understanding of the world and of himself; [vestiges still of male chauvinism!] and
>
> 2) by so doing, to serve as a pilot for other educators, schools, and communities to follow or modify in an effort to expand the availability of quality education to the children of Columbus and elsewhere.

Then it listed objectives including heterogeneous student body, active involvement of students and parents as well as teachers, open communications, use of the city's educational resources, and so forth. Its underlying premise was respect for the innate natural wisdom of children, mothers, and blacks. The school began with 60 elementary students housed in the education wing of the First Congregational Church, a cosmopolitan, interracial inner city church within walking distance of the city's cultural resources and public transportation.

I remember with nostalgia the excitement and high sense of mission of those early years. Parents volunteered in the classrooms. Antioch students interned with us. A soft-spoken black man from Ghana headed one classroom; an alternative-minded black woman frustrated with teaching in the Columbus public schools another; and an angry young radical man from the public schools in Detroit who had advertised in The New Schools Exchange "Teacher Drop-Out" section, headed the third classroom. Children of different ages were mixed together in what we called family groups. We built a playground in the church parking lot and moved in a trailer which we equipped as a workshop. We took daily walking field trips to such places as the library, the Center of Science and Industry, the city swimming pool, the Art Gallery, The Dispatch printing company, and by car to the zoo, fossil ridge, outlying farms, and parents' homes. We compiled a guide book, "child-tested", called "Around Columbus with Kids" and sold it as a fund-raiser. We also had innumerable spaghetti dinners, yard sales, bake sales, and craft sales to raise funds. We scrounged teaching materials from our friends' and our headed up the solicitation of contributions from foundations, corporations and individuals. I also chaired the Board of Trustees the first year, trying to facilitate communication and cooperation amongst business executives, minority parents and university professors.

During the first three years we changed directors three times until finally we had an effective triumvirate; Judy Zilber who lived and breathed the soul of the school and worked with kids and parents; Katy Gould, a credentialed educator who worked with the teachers as well as the State Board of Education; and I, who took on the fund-raising and the Metropolitan School Board. In 1971 Dave Lehman's family arrived in Columbus from Greenbriar, an alternative community and school in Texas which he had helped found. They enrolled their two children in Metropolitan School, and he skillfully facilitated evening encounter groups for our school community. In 1972 he founded the Ohio Coalition for Educational Alternatives Now (**OCEAN**) as a statewide network of the twenty alternative schools that had suddenly sprung up in Ohio. At **OCEAN**'s first Conference in 1974, two hundred attended and the keynote speaker was Ed Nagel, whose lawsuit challenging the state's constitutional right to regulate non-public schools we had read about in the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter*. Since Metropolitan School had just that year struggled through the politics and red tape of becoming accredited by the Ohio State Board of Education, even surviving public condemnation by the State Superintendent of Schools, Ed Nagel's story read like a fairy tale of a knight-in-shining-armor slaying the dragon. In the movement now we were connecting with other alternative schools around the country and finding we shared a common mission, a common experience of persecution, and a common struggle to survive financially. We became as close as brothers and sisters burning with the fire of revolution to free the children from "all forms of social, political, and economic oppression." *

I guess the church never expected Metropolitan School to be so successful an alternative or so disruptive of their pristine Gothic facilities and reverent atmosphere, although I continued to believe our program was the very embodiment of reverence for the Spirit of each human being. They asked us to leave at the end of our third year there, 1973. The school relocated in a succession of unused public school buildings, but these locations, outside the inner city, and the rents we had to pay for them, took its toll on our program and our finances. Finally a dream emerged for the location of the school that we could hardly have imagined manifesting in reality. A group of us climbed up on the roof of a condemned building in down-town Columbus and became ecstatic imagining how this and the other condemned old mansions on the block could be used as a school community; Lillie Mae wanted to run a thrift shop; Judy Zilber a coffee shop where we could meet and generate our own entertainment; George Jameson his own barber shop, myself amusic studio. We could even house teachers and welfare parents on the block.

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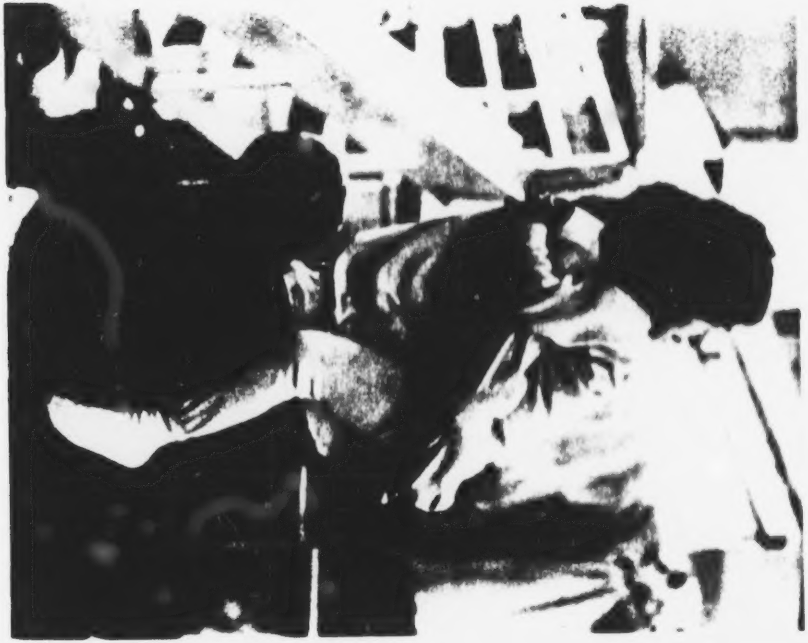
*from the by-laws of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools



Photograph courtesy of The Times Union

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Now came the fatal mistake that ended Metropolitan School. In my enthusiasm to actualize the vision, I trusted the city's leading power figures to help me with the project. They proceeded to provide the legitimacy to attract large funding grants to get the old houses renovated and a brand new building constructed for Metropolitan School. But my own husband, who had offered big money and his name on a prestigious super Board to support the project, later used his power, along with that of the other 'super stars' on the Board, to vote out the very spirit and life of the school in favor of a more 'professional' appearing institution.

I realize now how much naive faith I still had in the idealism of the city's leadership and how little faith in the power of the staff, parents, and children, which had been weakening because of burn-out. Many of the original parents, staff, and community supporters were becoming discouraged with the extreme amounts of energy and money the school was taking. I was one of them. My energy was being pulled between an extreme family situation in which my husband and I were polarized, and the grandiose needs of the new school project. Mostly I worried intensely about our three daughters, one of whom was seriously ill, and the others who had left home seeking a different life-style from the conventional one offered at home. Because of their father's disapproval of this, I took all the responsibility for their choices and worried about them alone.

During all these enormous changes the first National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools conference was held in a Salvation Army Camp north of Columbus in 1979. Before it started we assembled at our new $750,000 building, which I proudly showed off, marveling myself at how far we had come. I should have known then that the end was in sight, since the dream was actualizing on a remarkable material level, "thanks" to the values of the "super board," but at the more subtle cost of losing the essence and heart of the school.

After three years on the job Katy Gould, our wonderful director, burned out and the Board hired a new male director who soon evidenced his fear of children, especially alternative children. One thing he*was* good at, however, was organizing a professional- looking office. I remember how proud he was of his new strapping tape dispenser! He was a fairly successful fund raiser too. On the surface it looked as if everyone was getting enough of what they wanted to overlook the compromises for the time being. I was happily teaching violin to Metropolitan School students in my new studio next to the school. George Jameson set up his barber shop and Judy Zilber holding the school program and its eighty students together on the front lines. We were blissfully unaware that the new director, in collusion with a new Board chairman who had no history with the school, was strategizing to fire Judy Zilber and "upgrade" the staff to what they considered a "professional" level.

Judy was an embarrassment to the school's first-class image. Her desk was always messy and she didn't change her direct, deeply honest style of communication for anyone, be they prestigious or not. In January of 1979 the Board held a secret meeting at which they voted to fire Judy. Immediately thereafter the entire school community, the Board, and the "super board" were in an uproar. For three months we held meetings to try to heal the rift but supporters of Judy and the original participatory philosophy of the school would not compromise and neither would the new people in power. We old-timers could not believe what was happening. I felt stabbed in the back. With broken hearts Judy and I cleared all our stuff out of the school, confessing to each other how strong an urge we felt to throw stones through those fancy new windows. We grieved for all the dashed hopes of students and parents who had entrusted them to us. I was bitter that the privileged, the supposedly well-educated, the power elite of Columbus, had scuttled my ship and with it the most wonderfully diverse, lively, creative, and caring crew of kids and parents I had ever known.

With Judy and me completely out of their way the Metropolitan School Board hired all public school staff for the coming year, 1980-81. By December all but one student had dropped out and so the school closed forever. The "super board," with an eye to business, immediately rented the building to a ballet company. By now the other buildings in the block were also filled with paying customers; government-funded social service agencies and cultural groups backed by the wealthy. Grass-roots found no fertile soil here.

Meanwhile Judy and her loyal followers had started over again in a shabby abandoned public school building shared with several other counter-culture groups: tenant rights, recycling, a food co-op. I tried to help out but my heart was no longer in it. Judy's school folded in two years. In the back of my mind a new vision was forming.

If the main stream community wouldn't support an alternative school in its midst, the school would have to form its own alternative community around itself. I envisioned it on a large piece of land off of which we could support ourselves while raising and educating our children in a wholesome environment. In 1981 I left my husband and home of thirty years to move to a remote area of the Ozarks with a large home-schooling family experienced in farming, to start such a community. We advertised our intentions in *Mothering Magazine, Mother Earth News*, and *Growing Without Schooling* and were deluged with inquiries. Within a year three other families had joined us permanently and countless others had visited. Like the early pioneers most of our energy went into growing food and building houses, (five in three years), very little into democratic decision-making or conflict resolution. By 1984 serious dissension and stress broke up the group. This was another heart-breaking experience, but as with Metropolitan School I was learning what were the essential ingredients for maintaining a school which "marched to a different drummer." The results of this knowledge are now in full swing,but I still had another educational experience to go through before coming to my present place.

In 1987 I moved to Santa Fe Community School (SFCS) with which I had kept in touch over the years. SFCS had started as an alternative school in 1969, had also had its struggles swimming against the mainstream and trying to stay afloat financially, and was now likewise moving towards becoming an alternative residential community with the school as a part of it. After 15 years of experience it now had its democratic decision-making process functioning effectively. I joined in with them whole heartedly for several years, learning how integrated and unified a group can become when each of its members is empowered to voice his or her thoughts and feelings fully and to have them responded to by the group. But it soon became apparent to me that what I longed for was a location that wasn't so close to the city, so subject to its consumerism, competition, pollution, and regulations. Santa Fe's dry desert sand and shortage of water defeated my attempts to grow even so much as a blade of grass, and I felt that growing our own food was basic to our community's self-support.

After a three year search for a rural site, in 1987 several of us from SFCS moved to Paonia, Colorado, a small town nestled in a verdant agricultural valley surrounded by wilderness and snow covered Peaks. Here again was an alternative little school, Lamborn Valley School, in need of a community to support and operate it.

This time our community took plenty of time first to form deeply trusting relationships and find common spiritual ground. Then we developed a consensus process for decision-making. Now we are gradually working out how to share expenses, land, work, and the fruits thereof. The town, only a mile away, provides

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opportunities for supplementary income and educational resources without infringing on our life-style. In fact, an influx of "hippies" into the town during the 60's is credited with the presence of a community-run public radio station, an environmental newspaper, and an excellent health food store, in addition to our school.

We are still in the process of working out the balance between the families involved only with the school and those of us farming and living on the land around it. None of these families can afford to pay full-time teachers' salaries so partly by necessity, partly by preference, we each teach part-time, work part-time, and offer group schooling part-time. This kind of cooperative effort requires a very flexible organization which in turn requires deeply honest and frequent communication. We meditate together and ask within ourselves for the highest guidance concerning the needs of the group and the land we steward.

Twenty years ago I never could have imagined how wonderfully different kids raised in a free and natural environment would be. They are self-motivated, responsible, competent, eager to learn, kind to each other, and real with adults. Respect between children and adults is sincere and natural. The mixture here of school and community, of children and adults, of work, learning and play is deeply rewarding. Burnout is no longer a problem because of the flexibility and interchangeability of the members and the high degree of resourcefulness of the children. I stay refreshed by participating in a variety of activities but none of them for longer than I wish; teaching academics, teaching and playing violin, working in the garden, communing with other member of the group, playing, hosting visitors from far away places, going on occasional trips, and periodically retreating to thebeautiful mountain wilderness surrounding us.

My own children have learned as I had to the hard way not to give away their power but to believe in their own unique ability to actualize their dreams. What I particularly enjoy is watching the results of our family's evolution in three generations. I started an alternative life-style at age forty. My children started in their teens. My grandchildren, the oldest of whom is fifteen, have never known any other way. They are incredible people!

In conclusion, I would like to try to extract some principles from my twenty years of experience in the hopes that they may be helpful to others as a way of thinking about how to maintain truly alternative education. I believe we are dealing with three basic ingredients here:

> First, a quality of upbringing for children which we refer to as "school" because that is what the law requires;
>
> Second, a community of adults who are inspired to be the motivating energy and who maintain their inspiration by nurturing their relationships and empowering each other through a consensus process of decisionmaking;
>
> Third, a material base of support which may be property, money, or one's labor.

The challenge is to merge all three elements into action that is fully economical of energy, in the deepest and most comprehensive sense. The integration must be so complete that the living and learing of the children happens simultaneously with the activities of the adults who are choosing creative work that is nurturing at the same time it is meeting practical needs. This is the only way I've seen that anyone can afford the highest quality of education for their children, in terms of time, energy, and money. And it's the most satisfying life-style I've ever experienced. In these days when the survival of the planet is at stake, it is time for us to get back to living according to this ecological principle, as nature intended.

Lu Vorys has been a staunch, thoughtful and deeply honest member of the Coalition for lo these many years. We have loved and depended on her a lot in a great many ways. It is high time we also began acknowledging her unique role in the birth and continuing survival of our organization.

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HISTORY OF THE FREE SCHOOL
by Mary M. Leue

Learning Our Trade (Part One):

In 1969, my husband and I, accompanied by our two youngest kids, returned from a year in England, where the two kids had been enrolled in a village school. It had been a good year for them, especially for Mark, and the return to a typical Albany fifth grade in the public school he had been attending before we left was a real shock. Thirty-five kids were cooped up in a classroom designed for twenty, with a teacher so frazzled and overworked that she actually had to be hospitalized on the psychiatric ward of our local hospital shortly after I let Mark persuade me that he really couldn't stand the prison-like atmosphere any longer. Any hesitation I may have had as to the wisdom of this decision vanished when I heard of her breakdown. Mark had good instincts, as do most kids!

The first thing I had to do was to establish the legality of keeping Mark at home, and the principal of his school left me no doubt on this issue, calling me to warn me of legal action against me the very day the school nurse ascertained from me that Mark was indeed not sick but had withdrawn from school. Being in the state capital, I decided to make some phone calls to find out for myself if this was actually the case, since I was a teacher. I was fortunate indeed to find a man in the curriculum department of the state department of education who assured me that my action was legal, and who offered to give "state guidelines" to anyone from the local school board who hassled me. This, again, was fortunate, because the very next day I received a call from the head of the bureau of "attendance and guidance," (the truant officer), who began an impassioned harangue warning me of the terrible things that were about to occur to me should I refuse to bring Mark back at once, but calmed right down when I gave him the name of the man from "State Ed."

Shortly after this, he called back and apologized for his previous manner, assuring me that what I was doing was fine, and that he would be happy to give me any help he could if I should run into any problems. And, actually, during the fourteen years of our existence, this has been the case. Joe Markham has been our liaison with the superintendent of schools, has given us a lot of help in various times of trouble including a brush two years ago with the county health department, and has been not only respectful of our operation but really sympathetic with our purpose, since his chief clientele comes from the same "population" ours does, and he knows the problems that can arise.

About two weeks after Mark and I got started on our tutorial venture, I ran into a friend with six children in another of Albany's "finest" public schools, and when she heard what I had done, begged me to take on her three youngest, who she said were acting as though their lives were on the line every morning when going-to-school time came around, and whom she usually ended up having to accompany there. One of my chief worries had been that Mark would feel isolated from his friends, and this sounded great, so I agreed at once, and we were in the school business!

The year we spent at my home went swimmingly. We all loved the experience, and since it was the year of the student strikes and the Cambodia crisis, as well as the initiation of "Earth Day," it was a very exciting time to be "free" of school - and for me, to be actually conducting my own little "unschool," planning and carrying out my own design of curriculum, which included a lot of projects like picking up twelve trash bags of cans, bottles and other garbage thrown down an embankment by the side of a public road near the house (on Earth Day), helping at a day care center set up for the children of university strikers and others, putting on home-written plays, learning to develop film, making our own movies, cooking and baking, and generally enjoying ourselves a great deal while learning the three R's.

Toward the end of the year, we took a vote and decided to go on with the school the following year, even though the other three were moving during the summer, and so, we would be back to a population of one. I decided to ask for advice at this point, and went to see a friend of mine whom I trusted as having an enlightened view of children's education, she being the religious education director of the local Unitarian Church where I had taught Sunday School for a number of years. Her advice was to have a talk with an educational filmmaker in Newton, Massachusetts, who was running a resource center for early childhood education and whose films dealt with the development of successful alternative education programs in various places, notably the experiments in Philadelphia associated with the Parkway Program, but on an elementary level.

I took a week off from school, and went on my travels. Alan Leitman, the filmmaker, received me warmly, and gave me several suggestions. One was that I first ask a local newspaper to do a feature on our little school, and then that I rent a few films depicting the kind of school I was interested in creating and show them in community places, in order to attract the kinds of families who would want our kind of school for their kids. He also suggested that I visit a few "free schools" in the New York state and New England regions, to see how they actually look in action. He warned me to start small, learn my "trade" at every stage of the process before moving to a larger operation, and in general, to ensure that the enterprise was sound at every step of the way; that we really knew our business and were accomplishing what we set out to do, not just playing kid games. That advice still governs everything we do.

So, I began that very day, visiting Jonathan Kozol's Roxbury Community School on the way home, and three others over the following few days, one in Buffalo, one in Syracuse, and a third in New York City - the Fifteenth Street School. A week later an article appeared in the newspaper which included large pictures of the five of us gathered (untypically) around our round dining room table surrounded by books and papers. It also mentioned that I would be showing three films on "free school" education at the Unitarian Church and at the university, which I did the following week to crowded rooms of fascinated adults whose appetite for information about this new "thing" seemed boundless. Out of these three exposures to the public, I found a group of four families interested in sending us their children and in working as a group to help us find a suitable building and at least one other teacher for the seven kids who would be involved.

Suddenly, providentially and wholly unexpectedly, a friend of my older sons gave me a call and asked if he could drop over to chat. Puzzled, I agreed, and lo, what he wanted to talk about was his wish to quit high school teaching (where his best friend had been recently fired for refusing to shave off his beard) and come to teach with me at our fledgling school, now christened 'The Free School' by my four students. I agreed enthusiastically, and introduced him to our little group of parents at the next strategy meeting. They were equally delighted.

By this time, June was over and our school was out for the summer. One other mother and I set out in earnest to find a building where we could hold forth, and right away, the first snags began to appear. There were no buildings to be had that we could afford which would give us what I knew to be an absolute necessity as a school site - one large room for gatherings, roughhouse, and general togetherness, plus enough additional space for activity rooms, eating, a lab, at least one good bathroom, an office, a good-sized kitchen, and play space outside. We literally searched for weeks, surveying the entire region, even including the top floor of a factory building which would have been ideal as a huge area on which we could erect our own partitions at will, the owners of which had been playing with offering it to the city for a municipally-funded day care center. At the last minute, they said no, after learning that we would be privately funded at a rate far below what they had been hoping to get from the city! Like Tom Lehrer's "old dope peddler," they had wanted to "do well by doing good."

We began desperately asking churches for space in their Sunday School quarters, were refused by at least three church boards and suddenly, were offered the rental of an entire church building for $100 a month by a black minister whose congregation had bought a fine stone church across town and were moving out. This was a frame building in a state of great neglect but essential soundness, and we grabbed for it frantically and with great relief, because, by this time it was nearing the end of the summer and we had not yet even begun to prepare the space for the school. After a hasty consultation with our parent group, and with the reality of our financial straits before our faces, we all agreed on this building, which was in the inner city. The price was right, the size was ideal, and our appetite for renovation was boundless, none of us having done any!

Immediately, we all set out to put it into usable shape. Working virtually around the clock, sharing coffee and sandwiches far into the night, we worked to cover up the grime with new paint, even going so far as to paint floor-to-ceiling blackboards in several rooms, scrubbing whatever we could not paint, attaching as a fire escape an iron staircase we found at a wrecking company to an upstairs door which had opened onto thin air, for a reason none of us ever fathomed. By the time school started, we had already grown to love this place, funky as it was, but indisputably ours!

One event which had charmed and excited me, but which proved a harbinger of trouble to come, was the fact that, no sooner had we opened our doors (to let in fresh air as well as to bring in ladders and so on) than hordes of curious black children began coming inside, asking us a zillion questions and begging to be allowed to stay and color or play school. These ranged from the ages of three and four up to twelve at least, all from Southern black refugee families who had come seeking work in this northern city, and all wanted to know, "What dis place?" When they learned that we were a school ("A *school*? You a school? Yo' kids goin' play heah?), asked us, "Kin ah come?"

We began having dreams of attracting a whole schoolful of neighborhood kids as students. Our universal answer to their questions was, "Go ask your momma, and if she says you can, you tell her to come and talk with us and then you can come here, OK?" The older ones would ask, "Do it cost money?" and my instinct was always to say, "No, it's free." My hunger for the children was always greater than my financial sense, and I guess I haven't yet changed that. Fortunately for me, Bruce, the other teacher, felt the same way about the children as I did, so at least at this point, there was no trouble. But it was coming.

Oddly enough, it came from the direction of the only black mother among our parent group, Dorothea, a well-educated and cultured woman whose husband was a university professor, but who had evidently grown up in Harlem among lower class black people. Her eight-year-old son Tami was obviously quite timorous in the presence of so many street-wise ghetto children, especially of two brothers, one ten, the other twelve, whose father had been living alone in a tiny apartment on the first floor of the church as caretaker, and whose presence struck us as a good idea, especially since he was on SSI payments for a bad back, and so, required no pay for continuing to keep an eye on the building in a neighborhood swarming with bold and curious kids who had nothing in their lives to catch their passion except illegal but highly exciting street activities of one sort or another. Also, he was the father of these particular brothers, whom we had spotted as potential troublemakers or students, depending on how we played our cards.

One day while Dorothea was painting walls and Tami was playing with Gordon and Louis, the brothers, and I was scrubbing the bathroom floor off the kitchen, I heard yelling and then an awful sound of thumping, over and over! I ran out, and was just in time to see Gordon and Louis pick themselves up at the bottom of our very long, steep staircase. Dorothea was standing at the top of the stairs, yelling down at them to go home (they lived with their mother on a nearby street.) Both boys stood for a while at the bottom of the stairs stunned, then broke into a run and disappeared. When I inquired from Dorothea what had happened, she told me Louis had been holding Tami's arms pinned at his sides while Gordon began to run at him with his head lowered in butting position. She had intervened at this point and had taken both boys by the arm, dragged them to the stairs and bodily thrown them down! I was appalled, but she was so visibly shaken herself that I knew that this was not the time to try to reason with her.

But when a crowd of angry black men, women, and children of various sizes appeared in the street in front of the building, some of them armed with iron pipes and bricks, I told Dorothea quietly, "I would like you to go down and talk with these people. I'll come with you, but this has to be set straight, and you will have to do it if you can." The scene that followed would have been the ultimate irony if it had not been so poignantly tragic. Picture Dorothea, attractive and cultured in her modified Afro hair-style, silver linen skirt and hand-woven blouse, finely crafted silver earrings dangling from her ears, hand-made sandals on her feet, crying out passionately to this group of black people whose whole appearance bespoke their proximity in time and history to the post-reconstruction agricultural south of the share-cropper newly come north to seek refuge from hunger and despair, "I know you people! I am one of you! I grew up with people just like you, and you are all killers!" To me, it was a wonder they didn't lynch her on the spot. But gradually, by degrees, Bruce and I managed to quiet the mob spirit by apologizing for the incident and assuring the tribe (for it turned out that every one of them were the boys' relatives - aunts, uncles, cousins, and so on) that it would not happen again, and that we regretted it very much. It was a foretaste of what was to come out of our naive and explosive effort to conduct a free school for middle-class people (among others) in the midst of a totally neglected and furiously angry welfare proletariat (I cannot think of any other term which so aptly fits the characteristics of this group).

The school year got underway in early September, initially with eleven kids, all middle-class. Bruce and I found we could work together very well indeed, and our parents seemed happy with the new experiment. We met weekly to discuss funding and other considerations, and seemed to get on very well together. One day late in the month a charming young woman, Kathy, appeared at our door and asked if she could teach with us, having just graduated from an Ohio school of education. Of course, we agreed enthusiastically, and the children all fell in love with her.

Our only problem was finding enough money to pay salaries, rent, phone and utilities. We all came up with all sorts of strategies for raising this money, and participated enthusiastically in doing so. We had bake sales, rummage sales, garage sales, and candy sales, all good middle-class strategies our parents could throw themselves into enthusiastically. None of them raised much money, but they were a lot of fun. Soon three other families joined us, and we really felt we had a nice little school going. Gordon, the younger of the black boys whom Dorothea had been pushed downstairs, asked to become a member of the school, and we all agreed amicably - even Dorothea and her husband. Things seemed to be going amazingly well.

Then two things happened, some time in December or early January. Two new children enrolled in the school, and two new families brought us their children, a significant distinction, as it turned out.. The mix proved to be dynamite. First, the children. One snowy day a bedraggled little troupe of four children resembling nothing so much as Wendy and the lost boys from *Peter Pan* arrived on our doorstep from out of the soft white opaqueness that covered the city's ugliness.. "What is this place?" asks one. "A school," we answer. "Can we visit?" "Sure, if you behave yourselves." So in they come: Kitty, a skinny girl of fifteen (as we subsequently learned) who could pass for twelve, Jimmy and Ernest, her brothers, ten and eleven, one light-skinned, the other white; and Alfred, their white cousin, a kid of thirteen the size of an average seven-year-old and with a manner to match, squint-eyed and "hyper," having been labeled by the school psychologist as retarded, with an IQ of 60-some and in a "special education" course, a total non-reader, and slated for residential warehousing in a state school for the retarded.

Naturally, these truants were delighted with us all, and immediately asked if they could join the school. Standard response, "Go home and ask your mother. If it's O.K. with her, it's O.K. with us."

Well, Alfred was sure his mother would approve, and dashed off to ask her. Kitty, who seemed to be the spokesperson for all three members of her family, informed us that her mother was dead and that her father probably would not agree, but said she would ask anyway. Half an hour later, Alfred appeared virtually dragging his mother, who reluctantly gave her approval of his admission, saying, "Well, I was just about ready to send him to Rome anyway (a state institution for retarded children which subsequently became notorious for its flagrant abuse and neglect of its inmates). I can't do nothin' with him, and that school has him in one of them special classes. He ain't learnin' nothin'. If he wants to come here, it'll be the first time he ever wanted to be in a school, so I guess he can come here."

Alfred was so overjoyed at this that he whooped and sprang upon me, wrapping both arms and legs around my body and squeezing tightly, as if to insure a permanent bond that would never again come loose! And actually, it never has!

Alfred was with us for three exciting years, during which time he managed to create lots of drama around himself. Once he nearly electrocuted himself fiddling with the guts of an old TV set. Once I had to bail him out of the local police station for robbing somebody's mailbox of their welfare check! Mainly, however, he couldn't sit still in one place for more than a few minutes! It was as though his energy system simply worked too fast for him to be able to slow down long enough to learn how to decode the verbal symbols, which to me was an odd definition of retardation! Is it "retarded" to live too rapidly? The spirit in that "retarded" body was absolutely pure and sweet!

But the miracle of Alfred takes up long after we left off, and for me, is the most confirming evidence of the real nature of learning I have ever known. When he left, at the age of nearly sixteen, he still couldn't read, although his math was pretty good.

He didn't learn to read for many, many years - despite enrolling *twice* in adult education programs after leaving us. He finally quit trying, and got a job in a garage for a while until they fired him for not being able - or willing - to complete jobs. The next thing we heard, he was married, at about seventeen, and had a child. He would come back from time to time, full of optimism about his future, but he couldn't seem to stick at anything for long. For a while he lived in Florida on welfare with his wife and child. Then we heard he had enrolled in another reading course, still unable to read, and had been drifting from one job to another and from one part of the country to another. Somehow he seems to have kept the dream in his mind of learning to read.

I saw him on the street near his house during one of his periodic trips home about six years after he left us. I asked him how it was going. He answered, shaking his head solemnly, "Well, I had to leave my wife and come back home. We were fighting too much. But Mary, you should see my room now. I got shelves all around my bed and I keep buyin' books to put on them. I *love* books!" Could he read? No, not really, not yet. I parted from him with wet eyes.

One day some years later I got a call from a Catholic priest in a nearby city who wanted to know if this young man Alfred was for real, did he *really* want to learn how to read, was what he was telling him actually true? By this time, Alfred must have been around twenty-four or so. In ordinary terms, his story was pretty unbelievable, I guess. I said it was all true, that he was somebody special, and urged him to do the best he could for our Alfred. I don't know if it was this time he made it or the next time, but somehow, some way, he got through that narrow door! One of our teachers, Chris, who had known him at school, saw him at the supermarket just before Christmas. Chris was blown away. He said Alfred had grown almost a foot, that his crooked eyes were now straight, and that he looked *manly* - his hair was no longer sticking up in unruly points, he looked at you clear-eyed and steadily. Alfred told Chris that he could now read, and loved it, and had a good job and a good marriage with four kids - that his life was great! Chris told us he could see that it was true! We don't take credit for that. It is Alfred's triumph! But he learned that ability to believe in himself with us!

But back to the narrative: Alfred's cousin Kitty came back a while after Alfred and his mother, with a different story. "My father says I can come, because he don't care about me, but the boys gotta go to public school and learn somethin'." She had already taken them back to their school, where she had been supposed to bring them in the first place. How their father *knew* the boys wouldn't learn anything in our school seems a bit mysterious to me. Perhaps he believed that if you hated school, that was a sure sign it was a good one, and if you didn't learn there, then that just showed your cussedness, or your stupidity. In other words, within his lights, he was being a conscientious father!

The fact that Ernest and Jimmy would play truant every time they dared and would come to us (which meant one of us, usually me, trudging with them all the way back to their school, knocking on the classroom door - they were in the same "special ed" class - having the sour-faced guard - oops, I mean, teacher - unlock it and greet them with exasperation, shooting a resentful look at me, as though I were responsible for their evil conduct) meant nothing to him except to confirm his belief in their criminality. (Editorial note: this particular school is unchanged from that time (1971) until this (1991), is still kept essentially locked up to prevent children from either escaping or attacking one another on the school grounds - as one of our teachers from the Free School discovered to her horror when one of her children opted to go to our district public school!)

And Jimmy has in fact spent most of his young adult life in prison for various crimes. Ernest, Kitty informed me, "had a rubber hose up his ass and would die if he got kicked," which I took to mean he had had his colon or rectum resected for ulcerative colitis. At any rate, this seems to have kept him docile and law-abiding, even though he too has never learned to read, let alone find a job. He lives with Kitty and has indeed become a "lost boy."

It has been sad, though, watching Jimmy change from an angelic-looking boy with light brown skin and curls and a wistful look in his eye to a sullen, hate-filled criminal who eyes you cynically, when he bothers to acknowledge you at all. Jimmy's trouble is that he's not dumb enough to accept his fate! His native wit rebels. It is appalling to me to see his sad, intelligent spirit imprisoned in that ugly body and mind. No, Kitty never learned to read, either, but she did find out who her friends were. She has six children, now, at the age of twenty-eight, and for several years, would bring them to us, one by one, as they reached the age of three. Repeated pregnancy and child-rearing have taken their toll of her appetite for motherhood, alas, and she finally took her four away from us when the oldest two, who adore their father, began wetting their beds and in other ways behaving badly at home after he left finally and for good, and we took his side in wanting regular visitation rights - but at least the three oldest are still "ours," and will be all right, we hope and believe. Kitty does have an instinct for finding good men to father her children, and the present one, who is father to the two youngest, really seems to care for the entire brood, even though his hand is sometimes too heavy. We stay in touch.

But this is still in the future, and my narrative is of the past. The new families proved a problem far greater than the new children. One father, Lamont, was an assistant professor of psychology from the university newly married to a young widow with three children, the oldest of which was our student. This man was determined to assert his parental authority - with this boy in particular. It was clear that he believed that Donny had been spoiled by his mother. He had considerable skepticism about the nature of our school to begin with, and as his PhD thesis was on the subject of non-violence and we were located in the ghetto, Lamont was prone to seeing violence everywhere.

His interventions, or efforts to intervene, in our school policy of encouraging children to work out their own solutions to interpersonal problems via a council meeting system of self-governance as well as by other problem-solving devices which did not prevent violence as such but taught them how to handle problems which left unsolved would have led to violence, struck us as authoritarian in impact, as our policies struck him, evidently, as anarchical.

Parent meetings began to acquire the characteristics of a battleground, with factions lining up pro and con school personnel and policies, but mostly con. It was an uncomfortable time, and its effect on the school was to cause those of us who were actually at school from day to day to decide to adopt a policy of permitting only those who were actually involved in being there to make rules as to how we could or should do things. Any parent who chose to be there would automatically be a part of that decision-making process, but other parents could only request, advise or suggest, but not demand or direct. It was our first real move toward absolute internal autonomy, and is still in effect. I still believe it is the only possible way we could have managed things in such a way as to make them work, but the cost in loss of families was great at the time. All but four of them withdrew their kids at the end of the school year.

But this division was only the beginning of our troubles! The other new family was a divorced wife and her son Bobby. Susannah was living with a black militant, still a *big* no-no in our society, at least for middle-class families - and even now, I believe, grounds for loss of custody of a woman's child with most family court judges. We got caught in the midst of the custody battle for control of where Bobby would live and go to school. His father, a pathologist at the local medical school, had as his lawyer a former city court judge who elected to focus on our school as the second grounds for his client's custody of Robby, the first, of course, being his client's ex-wife's sexual preferences.

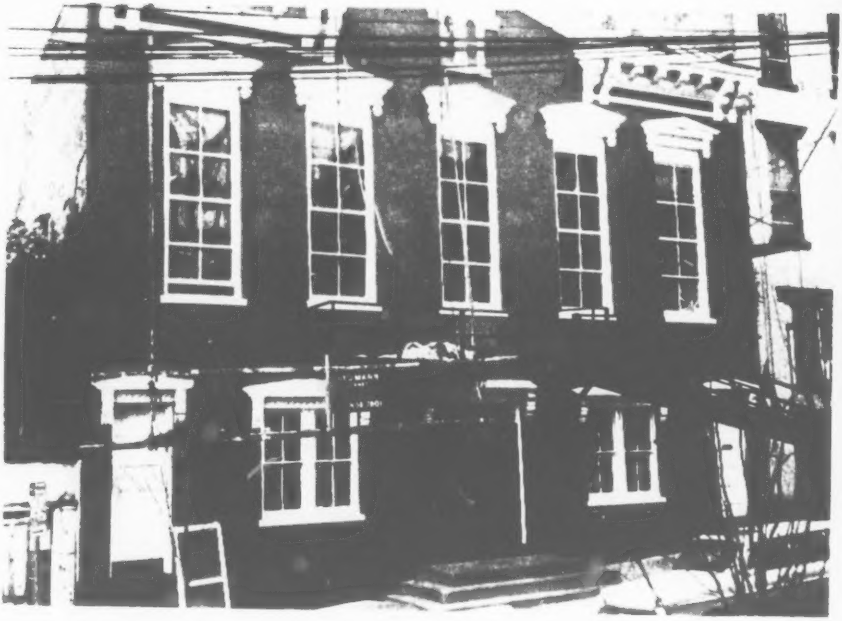
The first thing we knew about this was when we were visited, in rapid succession, by an attorney from the office of corporation counsel for the city, the chief of the fire department, an official from the building department, and a man from the county health department. One after another, these officials told us that we would be summarily shut down, some unless we complied with their requirements, others, just shut down, period. I must admit, we felt pretty alarmed, called an emergency meeting of parents, and began frantically trying to find out what, if anything, we could do to meet the situation.

Then the children got into the act. I guess that was my fault. I had felt badly crowded by the threat and had decided to bring out our big guns. I told the kids what was going on, in pretty colorful terms - and they decided to set up a picket line outside the school protesting the unfairness of the city. Then I called in the media. The signs made by the kids were most eloquent, and the photographers had a "human interest" field day - for which, read fair game for taking pot-shots at the city government. Reporters and picture-takers from both newspapers and all three TV channels swarmed, and we were a short term sensation for the silly season.

It was a stand-off. At the mayor's press conference every week, Herb Starr from Channel Six would ask him, "Well, have you closed The Free School down yet?" And he would answer, "I'm looking into it." The building department assigned us a permanent "advisor." It seems even our fire escape was illegal, lacking a platform at the top.

But...we weren't closed down. We made some changes, did some housekeeping, and let a lot of people know that we took their comments seriously. And gradually, the heat subsided. I made an appointment to talk with the mayor. He was *very* understanding, but made it *very* clear how much he deplored my having used the weapon of publicity. I was *very* apologetic and contrite. It was a real father-daughter scene. I think he was quite relieved to have us off his back.

So ended our first exciting year of the "official" school. Toward the end of the school year we had finally received our tax-exempt status from Internal Revenue, and since this had been reputed to be an extremely difficult feat to accomplish - and I had done it without legal representation or even setting up a corporation - I felt elated. Our funding problem was still an acute one, and I believed that having tax-exempt status would encourage people to donate money to us. The same mother who had helped me to find our building, Carol, and I now took on the task of seeking out a grant or grants to help us solve this problem. She and her husband David together wrote out a series of eloquent grant proposals and sent them to several corporations reputed to have given money to other schools like ours. We got



The Free School
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back a sheaf of polite and encouraging 'no's'.

It was very clear to all of us by now that our present building would not be suitable for occupancy the following year, and so, we set out to find a replacement. Quite early in the summer we located an ideal one, not far away, in the old Italian section of the south end, currently occupied by an Italian Catholic War Veterans' Post, and, historically, an Italian language parochial school, and before that, a German-language church! The building department would be ecstatic, we knew, and so would we if we could get it at a price we could afford. My first attempt to raise this money, or enough of it for a mortgage, was to write a small grant proposal to three local millionaires who had expressed an interest in the families living in the inner city. I was inspired to do this on reflecting that I had met two of them personally, and had heard from our teacher Kathy of the reputation for benevolence of the third, who was a friend of her father's and the owner of an electrical contracting firm which occasionally hired ghetto black adolescents. One of the other two I had met during a brief lecture series my philosophy professor husband had given at a nearby summer 'Chautauqua' focused on the role of science in society. This man, a highly successful contractor who had put up many of the new downtown buildings in Albany and was well-known as a patron of the arts locally, had wined and dined us both at his sumptuous home in the posh new-money section of the city, and was reputed to be both enlightened and humane.

The other, a lawyer from Troy (across the river from us) owned rental houses in the south end of Albany and was said to have a kindly interest in the "children of the ghetto," (presumably when he wasn't evicting tenants for protesting against his slumlord policies - although, to give him his due, he was by no means the worst of the absentee landlords, and was liked by most of his tenants!). Actually, he had come into our first school one day bringing us a box of second-hand *Cherry Ames* books, but had expressed disappointment at not seeing more black faces among the children. I believe we had only one really black face at that time - Gordon - although we had two light brown ones (one of them Tami) and one white one that masked *black blood* (shudder) - Kitty! But he was expecting shoe polish black, not interracial suntan. His "disappointment" was actually a twin of our own - or at least, of Bruce's and mine. We had only begun to learn that poor black parents are the most exacting of all groups in judging the potential usefulness of a school in money and status terms, and so, shunned ours as "dirty hippy."

It makes perfect sense that this should be the case, when you think of it. These parents know full well from their own experience (mostly in the South) with inferior all-black schooling in dilapidated housing that such institutions do not attract the truly gifted teachers needed to educate their children. And at least, the public schools exhibit good, middle-class values and offer skills which can, theoretically, offer a way out of poverty and ignorance. In this view, if their children fail to learn, it shows either that the teachers are prejudiced and hence, are discriminating against their children (which is often the case!) or that their children themselves are responsible for their own failure, which leaves the family helpless to remedy the situation except by punishing their children, or by tutoring them, a solution not accessible to illiterate parents. Much the more comfortable belief of the two, as well as the most statistically prevalent one, is the race-class prejudice one, which, alas, often leads to the result of working to bring about the very thing it believes in, teachers and principals being human like the rest of us. The working-class parents who feel comfortable with us all too often appear to feel instinctively that we must not know our business, and that for a school to instill middle-class values in a child, it must reflect those values, and hence, feel uncomfortable to those parents! Or so I gradually came to believe.

We were thus coming up against the "catch-22" aspect of the widely-held belief about money and status in the society which defeats everyone who is at the bottom of the heap. The general belief in our capitalist system is that you have to *have* (money, success, status) to *get* (money, success, status), and it is the way most capitalist institutions, such as banks, operate. Well, that belief is true of schooling as well, and has kept us from being more relevant than we are to working class families.

This was a paradox we were to encounter time and again in the history of our school, and it is one which I believe has defeated most innovative institutions in our society which focus on working to resolve some of the class and race problems that plague our country. Although, come to think of it, the phenomenon is not limited to working-class families, but is widely held to be true a great many middle-class families as well. We've always had a limited appeal to upwardly mobile families of whatever class, for the same reason - that they fear that their children will not enter the high-income level group they see as essential to acceptance in American society. It's a matter of values. Equating income level with freedom of choice creates strange ideological bed-fellows! Over the period (twenty-two years) of our school's existence we have seen as clearly as Neill did that the end result of attendance at The Free School creates an outlook which allows our graduates to choose innovatively how they wish to make their living, but it's hard to convince parents who have not experienced this personally that it can happen to their kids. Still - the number we have gotten and do get is a testimonial to the continued existence of a number of independent-minded families who have seen through the illusion of the "American Dream." We are still in business, still thriving, in the midst of the Reagan-Bush regressive economic razzle-dazzle.

From School to Community (Part 2)

The year we had just experienced did at least two things for us. First, it taught us a lot about what our values of schooling were and how important to us. These values had been there underlying our ways of doing things, but this year had, as it were, tested them in the fire of keen opposition and misfortune, and had helped us to consolidate what was real, in the sense that it had withstood the test of experience as opposed to being simply theoretical. Second, the year's events had brought home with unmistakable clarity the fact that you cannot be all things to all people, but must accept the fact that people differ widely in their beliefs concerning children's education - and consequently, it behooves you to be as open and as clear as possible in offering a school to people as an alternative for their children. Doing this conscientiously means that you lose some right away, but failing to do so entails the far greater agony of learning after spending a great deal of time and effort to do a conscientious and loving job with a child that it is not what the parents had in mind at all, and that you fail for this reason - namely, that you and they are unwittingly working at cross-purposes.

I can say that we were able to understand this after a year of struggle with parents concerning who had the task of defining what was to happen, as well as what *was* happening! Actually, this process has proved to be the most important activity in which we engage in working with a family, and we are still occasionally surprised to discover a dimension of a family's value system we had not anticipated beforehand, with the unfortunate result that we lose the child.

Another interesting discovery we made along these lines has been the way in which the form of an institution follows the way in which it functions. One has a goal in mind, and one encounters obstacles in achieving that goal. The question is always, if something in the form of the institution is working to help create this obstacle, how can we change that form to resolve the problem? This is fairly straightforward. But the next question is, what effect will this change have on the way the school operates internally; and will the change in some way change our goal by producing different results from the ones we had had in mind? And if so, what? My surmise is that a lot of schools start out being quite flexible and even experimental, and thus, exciting places for children to go to school, but end up becoming a caricature of themselves as a result of modifying their goals instead of retaining their original insight into how a school can be. They fit the children increasingly into the structure of the school instead of continuing to fit the structure to the child; and the excitement dies! When this happens, my belief is that it is the last thing parents and most teachers are likely to notice, but will attribute the change to the children themselves, and will act accordingly, in the time-honored way of blaming the victim.

Another "solution" to such a problem may be to adopt a belief that, after all, schooling (in a formal sense of the word) isn't very important (as Neill seems to have done (at least if you take his writings literally, which is always a mistake!) at Summerhill). If a child is bright, he can always pick up skills elsewhere when he decides he wants them - and that to insist he learn them in *this* school would be tantamount to joining the other schools this one was set up to be an alternative *to*. Hm. True? Not to me. At least, not as a prescription for setting school policy. Let me explain, because it sounds as though I were saying, "But of course you've got to make children learn!" No, no. That's not it, for me.

To me "not making them do things" is a necessary strategy for living with kids who have strong ideas about what they do or do not want to do. Yes, I am going to let them "do their own thing," but I am not going to characterize my willingness to let them make their own choices as necessarily indicative of their inherent wisdom or autonomy - because it may not be either of those things. It may be indicative of inner pathology which warrants my deep concern, and ignoring which may constitute gross negligence! I do not want to use the modality of regulatory definition to bury my failures or send them off to other schools, as Neill did, for example. I know, because I asked him and he said, "Of course!"

Thus I cannot label as unequivocally splendid everything I choose to advocate and practice in my school. I know the "line" concerning "real democracy," but I can't tout it as a universal container for my own motivation. I'm not that much in command of my own "shadow" side, which sometimes takes on a life of its own. My motivation to pursue real democracy is sometimes absolutely true of me - but not necessarily. I can't turn my intentionality into a generalization! I personally love teaching and learning too much to toss them into the melting pot of "self-regulation" by or for kids. It seems to me a naive discount of myself as teacher to turn this much over to them. My kids love learning because I do - among other reasons. I refuse to leave myself out of the equation!

There is, of course, a real paradox involved in such a philosophy of education as I have just expounded. At first glance it doesn't appear to have anything in common with the outlook on total educational self-regulation/choice so brilliantly explicated by Dan Greenberg in all his pieces on the philosophy of Sudbury Valley School nor with Summerhill or The Highland School in West Virginia or Lewis-Wadhams (now defunct), to name a few examples of self-defined democratic alternative schools. Hey! - I'm not doubting that they are truly democratic! That's not what I'm on about!

The paradox, for me, inheres in the fact that, with the possible exception of old Neill, who was himself a walking paradox, all of these good people may be leaving out of the accounts they give of their schools the strong bias toward learning and the transmission of our common cultural heritage inherent in their own backgrounds and the backgrounds of other staff in their schools and thus brought to the children in the form of intangibles such as their personal impact as models, their school's educational/cultural facilities, initial selection of teachers and so on - and thus of fascinating alternatives subliminally available to children. This marriage between the ideological Spartanism of their words and the Athenian cultural wealth of the environments they provide for their kids creates a strange but wonderfully paradoxical environment which must be for these kids inherently fascinating and exciting - but to subsume all of this under the rubric of "democracy" strikes me as (unintendedly) obfuscatory. And it gets expressed at the expense of a lot of other alternative educational programs which may actually be equally good for kids but just not "do" it the same way!

My belief is that there may indeed be a large gap between such an ideological-cum-experiential mix and many run-of-the-mill middle class alternative schools - as Dan insists there is - perhaps, as he says, even most such schools! If so, I would surmise that these alternative schools may have, as it were, fallen inadvertently into a false position, perhaps in one of the ways I suggested above of gradually modified policy-making in response to unresolved problems - as seems to have happened to Lu Vorys' Metropolitan School in Columbus, Ohio (see profile above), and to a Coalition member school in a down-state county of New York which a woman (one of the founders) recently told me about. The latter finally succumbed a year or so ago for lack of students, having retreated a step at a time from their original policy of curricular and other forms of self-regulation by students.

Or perhaps it may happen for the reasons involving governance which Dan refers to in his article cited above ("Subtleties of a Democratic School."), influenced by philosophical left-wing political bias or a group mind mentality, as opposed to the pursuit of individualism and democracy in all aspects of the school - according to Dan. I would tend to classify such differences as a *socialistic* (or group-oriented) outlook versus a constitutionally *anarchistic* (or individualistic, à la Kropotkin) outlook - but that's my bias, I'm sure.

Basically, I believe education to be a fundamental *political* - not just a social - problem of democracy. We have the schools which our relative maturity as a people permits and reflects. Approaching possible solutions to our educational problems needs to be regarded as akin to therapy for a national as well as a personal disease. In proposing specific measures intended to provide symptomatic relief for these problems, we run the risk of masking a far more fundamental illness which we may be reluctant to face as a people and a culture. To me the basic problem is often one of institutionalized heartlessness, and as such is shared by us all, alternative schoolers, home schoolers and public schoolers alike.

Pursuing my suggestion that education is a political as much as it is a social phenomenon, it would follow that struggling to resolve some of our national problems involves practicing, among other things, the art of the possible. Or, as the popular slogan goes, "Think globally, act locally." And so, in this sense, I might say of us that we in our school carry on here year after year waiting and hoping that the rest of the country will catch up with us, delighted when some individual teacher or instructor in a local school of education - or a person from another country! - notices us and wonders if we have anything to contribute to their understanding. Over the years we have been visited by educationists from Canada, France, England, and Germany, but have never heard the extent to which we were able to give them something of value after they went back home. It is only recently, since we have been "discovered" by the Japanese, that

That's Italian! Rosalie and Betsy cooking anything we stand for seems to be sinking in. Well, thank goodness for that!

Back to the narrative. Having been refused by our three self-made millionaires, we had to look elsewhere for the money we needed. Actually, the neighborhood itself into which we wished to move provided us the solution to our financial problem. What was going on was a violent and destructive process among two groups, one a long-term, stable, and largely elderly Italian population, some first generation, most second generation, who had lived and raised their families in row houses they owned and kept up - and the other, an ever-increasing number of black welfare recipient tenants living in the row house apartments which had been sold to absentee landlords when their Italian owners grew prosperous and moved to the suburbs, leaving behind only the poor and the elderly. These black families, mostly single parent, had many children who were growing up largely unsocialized and unsupervised amid squalid neglect and despair as their mothers struggled to survive, moving from decaying building to decaying building, struggling to raise children with no parent support whatsoever, struggling with hostile and contemptuous welfare and clinic personnel, struggling to find momentary pleasures with black men who were themselves filled with despair and rage, struggling to defend the existence of their children by defending their behavior against all comers, no matter how delinquent or how inhuman that behavior might be. In other words, this was an armed camp, and battle lines were clearly drawn.

Upstairs-downstairs: up, puzzles with Mich; down, maps with Debby

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The Free School

The Free School gang as we were seventeen years ago

The advantage to us in this unfortunate, even tragic, situation was that the Catholic War Veterans as a group turned out to be such dedicated racists that they were determined to sell their building, even at considerable sacrifice, just so long as they could turn their backs on this neighborhood. We got a very good bargain. Additionally, in spite of the general policy being universally practiced by banks at that time of 'red-lining' areas of the inner city they considered bad financial risks for mortgage investment, I did manage to find one sympathetic mortgage officer willing to take a risk with us. We had to do a lot of hurdle-jumping too complicated to go into, but the upshot of it was that the school was able to move out of the storefront we had been using for three months into our new building before the end of November.

Moving into this wonderful building gave us all a marvelous boost in morale. We began making all sorts of innovations in providing the children with low-cost or donated educational equipment, such as a four-foot stack of 3'x 6' sheets of a product called TriWall, a three-layered corrugated cardboard sheet akin in stability and strength to plywood but far easier and cheaper to buy and to build with. We made bookcases, cubby holes, children's climbing and stacking equipment, tables, stools - oh, loads of other things! Then a woman who had done some printing for us gave us an equally large stack of 3'x3' sheets of glue-backed, squared paper called MacTac, which we put to equally extensive uses! In fact, you might say that our school for a number of years ran on Tri-Wall/MacTac power - since we sure didn't have money!

Almost immediately, we began attracting new families, a process which was enhanced by the fact that we asked the newspapers to run a feature on us, which they did. Life in our new neighborhood proved to be at least as exciting as it had been in the old one. The black children living within a block of us began begging to come inside, even beating on the door to be let in (We still have the cracks in our door panels to show for it!). Middle-class white mothers shrank back from the assaults of these black children in terror, and a couple even took their darling little blonde girls out of the school, claiming that it was too chaotic for them, that their children needed more "structure," (nothing to do with race or class, of course). When we sent the neighborhood children home for permission to attend our school, most were refused.

The word seemed to have gotten around very quickly that we were "not a real school." So we decided to start a pre-school which they *would* recognize as "real," because it would be relevant to their need to find a cheap, reliable, and friendly place to leave their small children while they went to work. This we could do. Soon, we had a group of around eight three- and four-year-olds, mostly black neighborhood, with two mothers in charge. This took place on the second floor of our building, which really was ideally suited for the purpose.

But we still had our financial problem. It was quite clear that we could not expect to survive indefinitely paying teachers nothing, yet we were equally determined not to become

Dylan as conductor of the band

a high tuition school. I didn't need salary, since my husband was a college teacher, but Bruce was cleaning offices after hours and on weekends in order to stay afloat, and his wife wanted to quit her job and have a baby, but felt she could not do so unless he could bring in a more reliable income. At this point, I bethought me of Jonathan Kozol's suggestion for solving this problem which he proposes in his book *Free Schools* (now reissued as *Alternative Schools*): run a busi-ness! I began discussing the possibility of setting up a textbook sale company. Nobody wanted to do this, and I realized I didn't, either. But the idea of a business stuck with me.

I have always been attracted to houses, have always wanted to own several. Well, I found a wonderful three-story house for sale on the next street over from ours, owned by an Italian family disgusted with the deterioration of the neighborhood and well enough off to buy elsewhere. I bargained, and we got it. Now I had to get tax exemption from the city for this building. I went about gathering information on the hows and whos of setting up a non-profit corporation, and finally managed to get it accepted by the state. Non-profit status by the city was more difficult, but we finally managed that, too. Within the space of about two years, we acquired four more buildings, one of them a garage next door to the school, one of them an abandoned building being auctioned by the county. All told, our six buildings cost approximately $40,000, most of which I fronted for the corporation, since we had been unable to find any other donors. This money I had inherited from my mother

Andy

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and my aunt, neither of whom had earned it, so I felt it only proper that this unearned money go into our project. I have never regretted this decision for one moment. That $40,000 is now worth at least $500,000 in the money of today and at today's real estate values for this area. I feel amply repaid by this knowledge! At the present writing, they bring in over $4,000 a month in income, from donated space in apartments.

But having the buildings did more than provide us with a source of income. It gave us space to offer people who wanted to teach with us in lieu of salary. That and one hearty meal at noon, courtesy of the government's free and reduced price lunch, went a long way toward supporting them, and we were able to offer a small weekly supplement to eke out a fairly decent rate. We soon had three new teachers, all of whom had sought us out, agreed to our terms, and started right in. Additionally, we made a connection with Antioch College's work-study program, and began taking on a student teacher per quarter, and then two at a time. This was the height of the national preoccupation with 'free schools,' and what we lacked in expertise and experience, we made up for in excitement. By 1974, we had became a community of some thirty children and seven full-time teachers plus two or sometimes three part-time or student assistants.

Our challenge now became, and has continued to be, to become fully relevant to the families of the neighborhood who had only the public schools of the ghetto as an alternative to us, not just or primarily to the families of the children we had begun busing in from other parts of the city. The popular preoccupation

Three faces of Teddy: confrontive, absorbed, reflective

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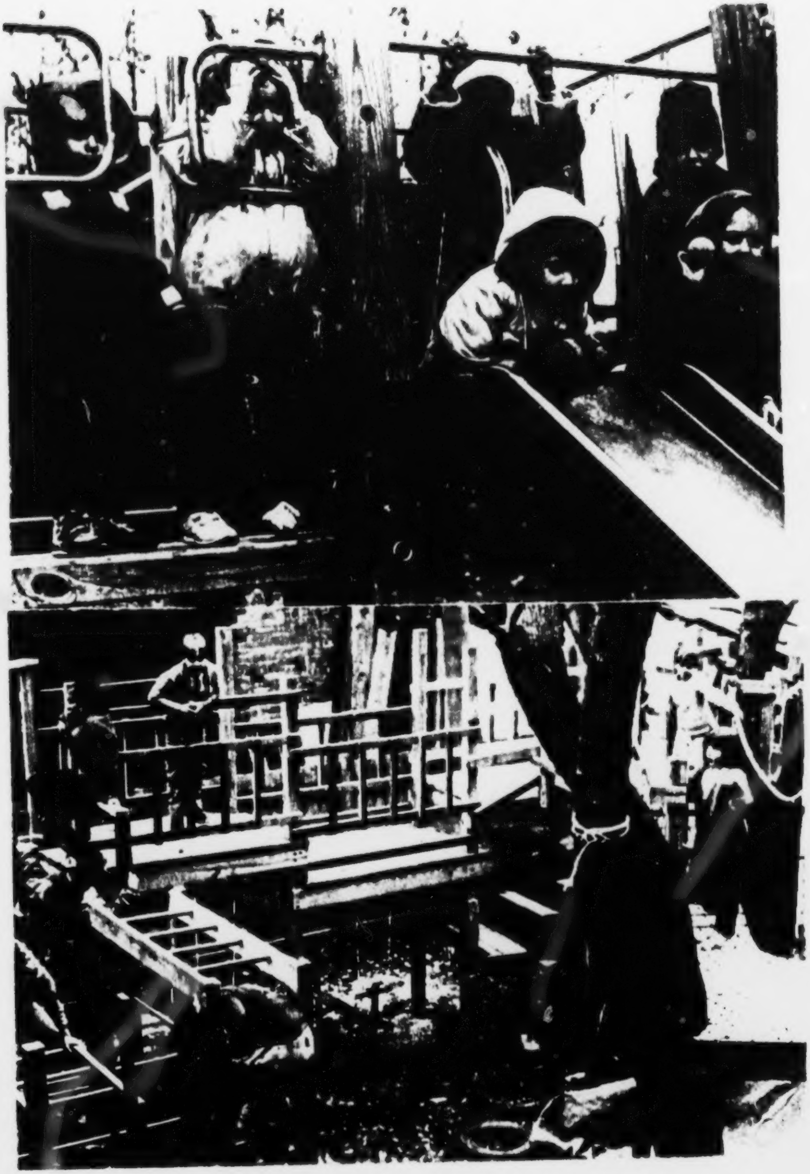
with the idea that school can be a place children love for its own sake was secondary in the minds of these folks to a clear insistence that their children learn to read, write, and cipher. One thing we discovered early on was that it is a lot easier to recognize what is wrong with schools and even what changes need to be made than it actually is to do it successfully yourself with all comers - and since we now had a lot of pre-schoolers and elementary school children whose parents would be judging us solely by our educational success, we knew we had to do a far better job than the public schools - and our group was certainly as diverse and multi-problematic as theirs.

The goals of such parents all too often clashed head-on with those of their children! We found ourselves spending far more time teaching kids to deal justly with personal conflicts of all sorts than with the three R's, although our arts and crafts program was always excellent. We understood how educationally relevant this effort at the learning of self-government was, but on the other hand, we did not want to lose kids, and parents had begun letting us know how dissatisfied they were with this emphasis. Since we actually agreed, it was a struggle, because the kids themselves had natural priorities which were perfectly valid in their *own* terms, and had to be respected - and yet, we needed to teach skills as well as work straightening out tangled feelings and beliefs! Our council meetings at this time sometimes took several hours out of the day. Trying to mix social classes and diverse racial and ethnic groups on a genuinely peer basis is more difficult than it might seem. Or so we discovered.



Child's work: playground 'assignments'

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My approach to this issue included a strong belief that teachers themselves need to be very clear and straight in their thinking and stable in their emotions in order to deal with the demands made upon them by kids with great needs, and yet we could not afford to hire therapeutically trained teachers, nor did we wish to! Part of my belief was that our school *had* to be open to all comers, and that this needed to include teachers as well as families. This policy had its painful moments, although I believe it has worked very much in our favor over the long run. I remember one teacher we had early on who suddenly "broke" and picked up a black boy of around eight and slammed him onto the floor in great fury! Fortunately, the child was not hurt. Yes, there had been provocation, but such a reaction was intolerable - to him as well as to everyone else.

We set up a personal growth group which met every week for three to four hours, at which time teachers and others who wished to join could work through their hangups. This was in 1974. That group is still going strong, with eighteen members at present, seven of whom are originals. I believe the continued existence of this group has been the core of the continuing life of the school and of the community itself. We also have teachers' meetings, for attending to the working of the school,, but this other group is special. We have learned all sorts of ways of giving people support to make changes over the years, such as transactional analysis, Gestalt, reparenting, Option, encounter, rebirthing, couples and relationship work.

"little women": Desirée and Alison;
"little men": Shannon and Bing

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began attracting families who wanted an apartment to live in, and who decided to let their children attend our school, usually because they found us friendly people to deal with in a very unfriendly world. In the process of rehabilitating our ten buildings for occupancy, we began to acquire a lot of skills - plumbing, wiring, sheet-rocking, carpentry, glazing, floor sanding, plastering, masonry, roofing, and so on.

Since most of our buildings were located on parallel streets, their back yards touched. When we had acquired them, these yards were filled with rubble, so we began clearing them out, planting gardens, and using them for socializing. Our properties had begun taking on more and more of the characteristics of a village, as we enjoyed our barbecues, birthday and holiday celebrations, and generally spending more time together.

One summer we had a barn-raising in the back yard of one of our teacher-families to get ready for a donated bred doe (female goat). Soon after, she gave birth to twin doe kids, and our serious farm-in-the city was launched! At present we have three does, the milk being shared by three families, a flock of chickens, who get fed mainly from the leftovers from school lunch, and bees.

Teachers who had come to teach with us as a novelty began seriously settling down and investing themselves in a more permanent and more monogamous pattern of living. The group became a kind of center for this new village which was coming into being, serving both to create a common ground of interest and to offer interpersonal support for dealing with the strains of getting through the hangups which divide people.

School families from farther away became attracted to this village atmosphere and began moving closer, either by finding a nearby rental apartment or by actually buying up an old or aban-doned building. We found our rehabilitation skills very popular indeed, and began gathering to help one another in weekend "work parties," at which twenty of us would pool our efforts on one place, accomplishing rapid and low-cost miracles of building rescue and refurbishment. More and more, our streets became after-school and summertime "play streets," with the old Italian people serving gladly as built-in stoop supervisors of their activities.

By 1978, so many young couples who were connected with us in one way or another were getting pregnant and coming up against the up-tightness and cost of obstetrical care that I decided to organize a pregnancy and childbirth support group which would function both to help them find what they wanted and would also function as an advocacy group for more enlightened and liberal attitudes toward birth. From this beginning, we moved on to the setting up of a center in the basement of one of our buildings which offered medical and legal self-help education at no or very low cost to anyone who wanted to use us. We named it The Family Life Center. One of our reasons for doing this was certainly a need to solve the problem of the high cost of medical insurance for our school people, but

Heather: little, with Daddy Paul,
and, older, engaged in one of her favorite pursuits

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the interesting thing was the fact that the more we worked with families to help them get what they wanted, the more we realized how revolutionary our concept was, and how much of a logical extension of the concept of a school which belongs to the families who use it.

It is my belief that the two institutions which create the worst feelings of helplessness on the part of families are the educational and the medical ones. A parent who runs into conflict with either of them can be seriously damaged, even jailed! People who accept the consequences for their children of the model of life on which these social institutions are based have no trouble they cannot handle, but if they cannot accept these beliefs and still have no other options, then they are going to feel bound into the larger society and hence to its rules. To belong to one of the clinics run by medically-insured health plans or to have group medical insurance necessitates a certain level of income, which insures that poor people have their "own" medical care and effectively shuts out anyone else. A young couple wanting to have a baby is going naturally to assume the necessity of a certain level of income in order to pay for this child's medical care. But even this distinction of class doesn't touch the heart of the problem as I see it. The real problem is the extent to which our society robs parents and children of their autonomy, starting right at birth, and continuing on through childhood. The outcome is, or may be, good for the society (although I actually do not believe that it is), but it creates all sorts of problems for the recipients of the "system." I'm not laying all our social problems at the doors of the schools and doctors' offices, but I am saying that in having taken over the traditional teaching functions which once belonged to parents and neighbors, they are responsible by default for the fact that people grow up and have children without either proper personal or social support and information with which to play the roles.

There are other agencies we have thought up like the Money Game, a mutual investment group which enables people with low incomes to invest in bank savings plans usually available only to people who put in lots of moola, Matrix, a birthing center for which we find medical backup among doctors who favor midwife-managed birth, and Rainbow Camp, a summer recrea-tion/camping/weekend workshop facility - a lodge on a small lake in the mountains near Albany which we have bought and use together..

Looking back at how we have developed our ways of governing ourselves, I suppose in the beginning I would have to say I had a lot to do with how decisions came to be made, because of having to get the school going the way I wanted it to go. It may be that this fact has led to our habit of seeking consensus on most decision-making that affects us all. I hate factionalism. Being a pretty decisive person, I guess the consensus tended to go more in the direction I wanted it to than not at first - but what that did was to discourage people who couldn't cope with my ways. Those who have stayed on are a very compatible and cooperative group of people who value autonomy as much as I do! Consensus defined in this way is not at all the "group mind" default process Dan describes so vividly. It is a way of grappling with problems long enough until their resolution in depth finally emerges. This is Quaker consensus, and is a function of true individualism.

The longer we have worked and lived with one another, the more we have come to respect one another and to value the process which leads to that consensus. We thoroughly enjoy one another's company, and spend a lot of time giving and going to one another's parties. We have had four weddings, and ten babies have been born to families in "the village." Because two of us are nurses, one having decided to take nurse's training after teaching in the school for eight years, we have been able to do a lot of labor coaching in the hospital with various school families, and have even done some home births - mostly with community families. The babies in the school who are between the ages of birth and two years seem to me a breed apart, so alert, outgoing, playful, active, and affectionate that it is a joy just to watch them together.

The school itself has changed very little in its overall composition over the twenty-two years we've been in the South End. For a while there were fewer black faces in the school as the neighborhood became increasingly "yuppyized," but we went out of our way to proselytize for the school in nursery-schools, daycare centers and churches to let parents from the area know we exist - and the result in recent years has been, again, a very good mix of kids from white and black liberal middle class families and white and black poor families.

As we have learned more and more comfort and trust in our ability to teach how well what we do works, we have become more and more relaxed about academic skills, especially knowing that our graduates have fared as well as they have, whether or not they left us with their 3 R's well in hand! We never had put much emphasis on formal classroom activities anyway, but sometimes felt a bit guilty about it - so, since this discovery fitted our initial presuppositions about the nature of learning anyway, being able to live our convictions has allowed us to become a place of great universal joy and satisfaction! Our community kids, growing up in the village environment, going to the village school, learning with their friends' parents as their teachers, helping with farm chores - surrounded by people they love and who love them - are extraordinary human beings! Or maybe I am just prejudiced.

Well, I guess I am, at that. I remember one early fall evening a few years ago when I was walking down to a meeting that was being held at Betsy and Chris' house (a house that had originally cost $500 at auction and had been slated for demolition when the young couple took it on. I only wish you could see it now!). At any rate, as I turned the corner and started down the narrow, steep street on which eight of 'our' houses are located, Ellen and Larry were just walking out of their half-done house with young Gabby perched on Larry's shoulders. Ned and Margaret were painting their new front steps and waved as we walked down the hill. Mickie peered out of her front window and gave a cheery hello. Howie, Nancy and Kaylana were working in their garden. Billy and Bridget were playing hide-and-seek with Kaleb from up the hill, and their mother was chatting with Edith on the front steps. Missie and Tyler were just rounding the corner from Elm St., and behind them ran Junie, scrambling to catch up. The golden evening light gave that village scene a kind of universal quality almost biblical in its feeling tone. That scene has stayed with me ever since. To me, the village has a special quality that makes it mine in a way nothing else can equal. It is home. It is life!

Mary Leue, mother of five, graduate of Bryn Mawr College and the Children's Hospital of Nursing in Boston, Mass., teacher and midwife, is the founder and director emeritus of The Free School and the editor/publisher of **ΣΚΟΛΕ**. This article was originally written in 1973, only slightly updated since that time.

L'ECOLE D'HUMANITE

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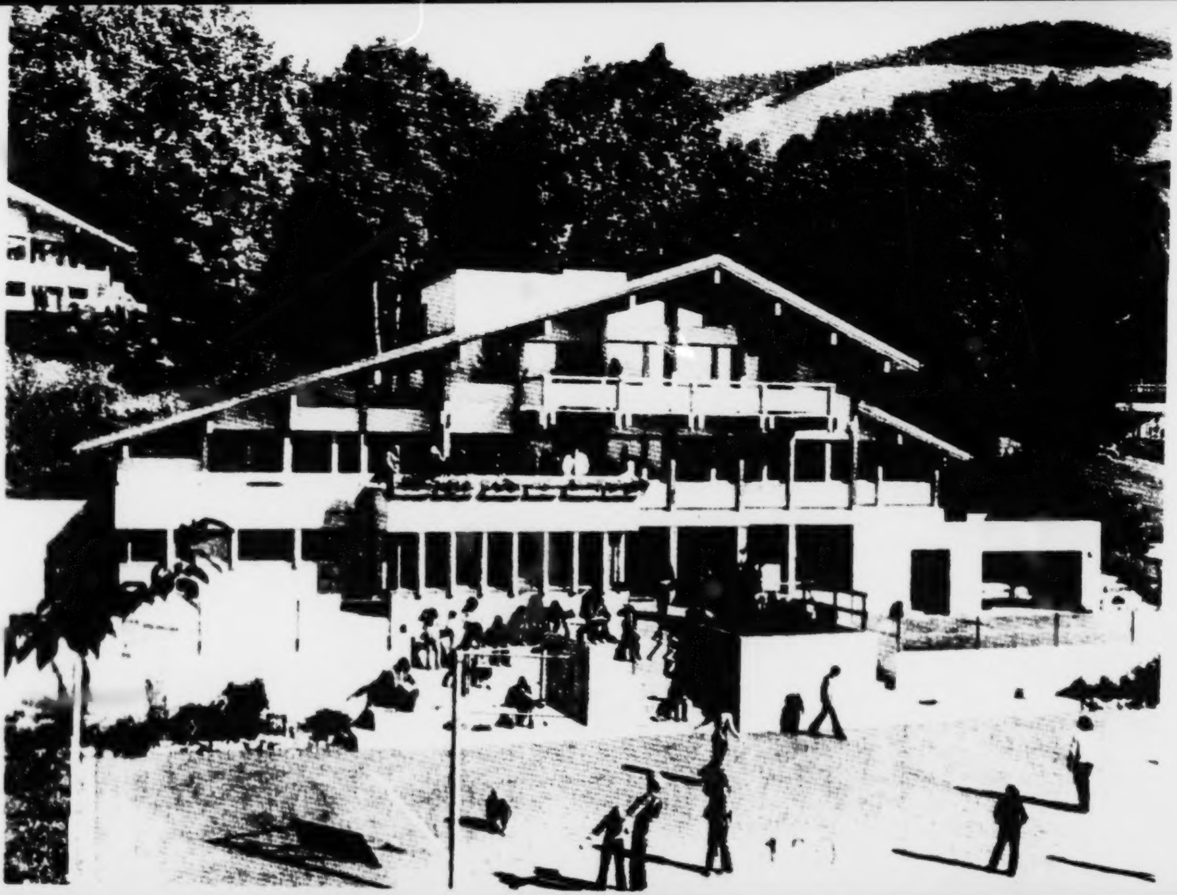
LEARNING WITHOUT FEAR

by Ernst Scagnet

Armin Luthi bends forward a bit and places his hand flat on the table. He is moved by what he has to tell. "Not much has changed in the public schools since the time when I was a high school student in Winterthür and was told that I couldn't become a teacher because I didn't get a top grade in gymnastics. I was very good in light athletics on the whole, but that didn't count. And no one ever knew that I played the violin pretty well. Today, after all these years, the school system still puts more emphasis on what a student can't do than on what he can, and anxiety about grades is still a major source of motivation."

Luthi became an educator after all. For nearly twenty years, along with his wife Natalie and Edith Geheeb, he has been the director of the Ecole d'Humanité (founded by Paul Geheeb) in the town of Goldern, on the slopes of the Hasliberg. The "Ecole," as it is known for short by the locals, is what people call an alternative school. "But I'm not sure I like that term," says Luthi, "although we often help to rescue youngsters who are misunderstood or oppressed in the public schools."

Now and again the man waxes ironic. "It's just marvelous how they get the students to work these days! They fill them with fear - about the shortage of apprenticeships, about the situation at our universities. And the intellectual overload is monstrous! I've spoken with the rector of a public *Gymnasium* (humanities-oriented upper school - Ed.) who told me that he



Another view of the school's central open space

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reckons with a weekly workload of seventy hours of intellectual effort for his students - as if they'd get twice as much out of that as they would out of 35 hours."

Our conversation takes place in Paul Geheeb's wood-paneled office. The room has not been altered since the pedagogue died in 1961. On the desk is a bronze bust of Wilhelm von Humboldt (educational reformer in the early 1800's, friend of Goethe, founder of the University of Berlin - Ed.); on the walls hang portraits of Einstein, Gandhi, Pestalozzi, Beethoven, Albert Schweitzer, Maria Montessori. On the door, next to the green-tiled wood-burning oven, is a pencil sketch showing the patriarchal head of the man who founded the Odenwald School and the Ecole D'Humanité. From the desk there is a splendid view of the mighty Wetterhorn peaks.

When Geheeb saw this view for the first time, he was already seventy-six years old, with a busy and productive life behind him. He was born in 1870 in Thüringia, Germany, son of a pharmacist; he studied theology, philosophy and psychiatry, among other things, and took his examination to become an upper-school teacher in 1899, concentrating on Protestant theology and Oriental languages. He was active in the women's rights movement of that time and in the struggle against working-class alcoholism, helped children from Berlin's poor districts, and had a head-on confrontation with Hermann Lietz, founder of the first of Germany's *Länderziehungsheime* ("country boarding schools"). Lietz did not believe that the impetus for much-needed human renewal could come within the existing society;

in his reformer's zeal, he founded schools situated well away from urban civilization. Geheeb began by working with Lietz, then tried his hand in Thüringia at the Wickersdorf Free School. Leaving that institution, and having met his wife-to-be, Edith Cassirer, in 1910, Geheeb finally founded the school of his dreams in Hessia: the Odenwald School. But in 1933 came the Nazis. Together with some of their students, parents and colleagues, the Geheebs emigrated to Switzerland, first to Versoix near Geneva, and later, in 1946, up to the Hasliberg.

Says Luthi: "After 1910 Paul and Edith Geheeb put into practice pedagogical principles over which today's educational reformers are still coming to grief."

The Ecole d'Humanité tries to provide education without anxiety. There are no grades, no report cards, no tests, no compulsion to stay in one's seat for hours at a time, little homework. Each student has a voice in creating his or her curriculum and at the end of each "course period" (a segment of the academic year lasting 5-6 weeks) the student himself evaluates his own success and difficulties, his teachers and the quality of instruction. Thus there is consistent education to prepare young people to take an active part in all aspects of life, as well as to develop tolerance among students and faculty of various nationalities, races, religions, social classes and degrees of ability. Here, again, differences are meant to be a source of enrichment rather than of anxiety.

Social learning, manual skills and the arts are taken as seriously here as academics. And the adults of the school try in every way to avoid the symbols of power, just as Geheeb insisted. "A tremendous, unceasing disarmament must take place in the adult camp, a laying aside of the gigantic, superior force, physical and intellectual, economic and technical, which adults...have customarily used - and thus abused - as a matter of course in their relations with children."

That sounds fine. But what does it mean in practice, for example, to give the student a voice in creating his own curriculum? Just how much of a voice does he have?

"Our school structure is unusual," explains Luthi. "We divide the academic year into seven course periods of between five and six weeks each. During each course period a student studies three subjects of his choice in the mornings - only in the mornings, only three subjects, and always the same three throughout a given course period. On a sheet the student gets an overview of the entire school year, divided into course periods. Now he can make his choices. He can, for example, study German during two course periods, or four; he can take math for seven course periods, or only five. The study-plan sheet is filled in by the students and checked by myself. If a student opts to take German for only two periods out of the year, I check with the teachers. Is he so good in German that he doesn't need more, or so poor in the subject that he wants to get out of it? This stage is generally followed by endless talks - it is enormously important that the student gain insight into the situation and its realities and necessities. Ultimately, it is he who makes the decision, and he should make it without anxiety - but he has to

Advanced folk-dancing class

know the consequences.

Not often, but now and again, a student proves intransigent. Then Luthi has a talk with the parents. But if a so-called 'underachiever' enrolls at the Ecole and brings with him, let us say, an enormous resistance to French lessons, then, says Luthi, 'We may easily just do nothing about French for a year or even more. Again and again we've seen such students lose their anxiety after a certain amount of time. With the increasing self-confidence gained in other areas of study, they're usually ready to tackle the hated subject after a while.'

Afternoons the youngsters spend their time in their choice of about 70 activities - sports, arts, handcrafts, the social graces. Neither boys nor girls are forced to take any particular activity. Just as with the academics in the mornings, the only requirement is that they choose to do something.

Some people think that boarding schools are 'for the dumb children of wealthy parents.' Along with thirty-five teachers and about twenty-five other staff members, about a hundred and fifty students live at the Ecole. Of those, fifteen are the children of staff and a hundred and thirty-five are boarders. Why have their parents sent them to this school? Explains Luthi: 'In Switzerland children are seldom sent to private schools out of sheer enthusiasm. Usually there is some problem or other. The youngsters may be gifted in a very one-sided way; perhaps they are having difficulty adjusting to the public school system; they may be from broken homes or difficult family situations; possibly their public school teacher has had neither time nor sympathy for their particular kind of individuality. Right now, 58% of our children are Swiss, the rest being German, Dutch, Canadian, Indian, Nigerian, American.

'We always have more applications than available space, so we are selective in some ways. We prefer having equal numbers of boys and girls, and we try to balance age groups, skills, social background. Forty percent of our students receive financial aid from some agency or from the Ecole itself.'

Nevertheless there is a preponderance of children from prosperous families at the Ecole d'Humanité. Tuition, room and board add up to an average of around 14,000 francs a year (around $2,330 at current exchange rates - Ed.) - a price which can be afforded by few without substantial help, although the pro-rated charge of about Fr. 35 is not high compared to other private schools.

'In principle,' says Armin Luthi, 'when it comes to difficult children it is the discouraged ones we tend to take. Those are the ones we can help. Cases of neglect or laziness create major problems, on the other hand. Our system is too loose, it's too easy to fake your way through it. And we've had some bad experiences with youngsters with drug problems - we can't give them what they need; we're not a therapeutic institution.'

Is the Ecole d'Humanité, then, a kind of self-enclosed, gentle, womb-like world?

'No,' insists Luthi, 'we're not an island and we don't want to be one. Our school is free of anxiety, yes, but that doesn't mean that it's easier. Geheeb said: 'We want to make things more difficult for you, not easier.' And it's true, we come up against much tougher resistances here. My youngest daughter, for example: she's twelve years old and now it's her turn to make up the cleaning schedule. She's got big problems, conflicts, she has to find a way to manage things - and in a democratic fashion. It is difficult to really live democratically, and it is difficult for people to show true understanding for one another. The students come up against harsh reality, for example, when they advocate a good thing at our school meetings and fail to convince the others; they learn that it isn't enough to be a loyal advocate of something, you also have to deal with others' resignation or indifference. A failure is a failure even at our school. The important thing is what you do with it.'

The success of this kind of education is difficult to measure. Says the headmaster: 'I hear repeatedly that our former students are not easy people to have around, that they know how to defend themselves. By the time they start an apprenticeship or university studies, or switch to another school, they've developed initiative and a sense of their own worth - maybe from acting, or from dishwashing, it doesn't matter how. We offer a pedagogy of encouragement on every level. For many youngsters the freedom from anxiety comes as an enormous liberation.'

Purely academic success is monitored by Ernst Schlappi, inspector of schools for the Meiringen District. He visits the Ecole once a year - the same frequency with which he inspects the public schools. According to the laws of Canton Berne public

Other classes at L'Ecole

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and private schools must be subject to the same checks in grades 1-9. After the ninth year private schools may do as they please.

The sign on the door to the chemistry room says: "He who understands nothing but chemistry does not understand chemistry properly." The laboratory is in one of the new buildings constructed just a few years ago - a room full of glass and light, as modern schoolrooms are supposed to be. But schoolrooms are secondary at the Ecole d'Humanité. Teaching goes on wherever there is space.

In the ceramics workshop a teacher sits at a bench with his class, teaching English. The class consists of three girls. The atmosphere is decidedly relaxed. "I always thought," says youthful teacher Frank Wolf, who has lived at the Ecole for four years now, "that it's simpler working with small groups. But it isn't so. The demands are greater, and suddenly the individual looms as much more important. I'm exposed to each student very directly, and I try, without forcing, to awaken his or her understanding. Sometimes I succeed, sometimes I don't. But I'm forced constantly to question myself."

In Goldern there are teachers of various ages, various religions (or none), various views. There are even some who are authoritarian in their teaching methods. "Everything is open to discussion, everything is in flux," says Wolf. "It's important to establish some yardsticks for what must remain open and in flux and what must be kept as it is. Personally, I work here at the Ecole because of its principles, not its external rules and regulations; those may be questioned at any time. Most structures promote a superficial relationship to the students - but most at the Ecole do not. It is difficult, but interesting. I also want to see what I stimulate in the children and what effects they have on me. That's important for my own experience, for personality growth."

Are the Ecole's teachers idealists? In a certain sense, of course. Their earnings are modest (about a thousand francs a month, plus room and board) and they themselves are at their pupils' disposal virtually all day, every day. On the other hand, in another sense they are radical realists, because they are able to live out in a very personal way the things they believe in.

Patrick, a seventeen-year-old from Holland, and David, fourteen, from Britain, walk purposefully through the village of Goldern. They are on their way to *Nachbarschaftshilfe* ("helping the neighbors"). Today they will be assisting a local farmer. *Nachbarschaftshilfe* is one of the many elective afternoon activities, and both boys have chosen it voluntarily. Patrick has been at the Ecole for three years now; previously he was at a public school in the Netherlands. "They pay attention to me here. I feel like someone. And everybody knows everyone else. I find it easier to work here too," he says. Patrick is the head of a School Assembly of all students and teachers, which meets once a week or as often as needed. Everyone has the right to speak out at those meetings, says Patrick, and discussions continue until an opinion crystalizes. There is no voting. Instead the school director gets the sense of the meeting, and then makes a decision. Patrick finds this system perfectly acceptable. What he doesn't like so well sometimes are the house rules: No restaurants, no smoking or drinking, no private radios or players in the sleeping quarters, early to bed and early to rise. Why these regulations? "Well, that's the healthy life, I guess," he shrugs.

What it is, in fact, is the ascetic life-style inherited as a legacy from the old *Länderziehungsheime*. All the rules must be accepted by a prospective student before he or she registers for the Ecole d'Humanité, and the school insists on sticking to them even though prohibitions do not lead to insight. "I know this violates our basic concept," admits Armin Luthi. "But it was part of the plan from the very beginning. These rules derive from the original spirit of the *Länderziehungsheim*.." The asceticism includes a very measured encounter with the mass media, as well as cold showers at 6:30 AM.

The students live in family groups with their teachers. After breakfast everyone pitches in preparing the day's supply of potatoes and vegetables (the food here is emphatically simple and healthful). Then, before classes begin, rooms are cleaned up. In the evening, quiet descends at 8:15 and by 9:30 lights are out almost everywhere. The adults at the Ecole also sometimes have their difficulty keeping to the rules, especially the ban on smoking. But since boys and girls are in and out of their rooms all day, most of the teachers do not take advantage of the fact that they are permitted to smoke in their own quarters.

"What we have here," says Natalie Luthi, "is total co-education. Boys and girls live next door to each other, they're together all day. This takes a lot of the drama out of relations between the sexes - and often drains a lot of the romanticism away too, especially early in the morning. Someone who knows our school well once said that it is almost ominous how relaxed relations between the sexes are here. Naturally we have love affairs sometimes, but much less often than people assume.'

In this kind of co-educational community, Natalie Luthi points out, children of all age levels learn to live with adults, including some elderly people. But this kind of co-educational experience demands that the youngsters be provided with vital experiences: folk dancing, theater, adventurous hikes. 'And of course we've got to be careful that our students don't become involved in sexual relations, lest the authorities close us down. Aside from an occasional slip, you could say that it works.'

One important objective of co-education is the elimination of stereotyped sex roles. At the Ecole girls cut firewood and shovel snow when they feel like it, and boys clean toilets and bake cakes. The adults strive to set a good example and work closely together. They have a men's and women's discussion group, and someday they hope to merge them into one, 'when we feel free enough.'

Do people ever feel free enough? Edith Geheeb is ninety-four years old. She lives at the Ecole, still lively and alert, and participates in everything going on around her, beloved by students and teachers alike. (She has since died. Ed.) As Armin Luthi wrote on the occasion of her ninetieth birthday, she is a 'symbol of hope' for everyone at the school, because she has broken through "the distortions, constrictions and falsifications which our society imposes on women."

Says Edith Geheeb, "How differently people looked at children when Paul and I first married, more than 70 years ago. Everything has become much more difficult, but that difficulty is what constitutes the task for us educators. My husband used to say that everyone should think about his own development, about whether he leaves the world a little better than he was when he entered it."

The world has indeed changed and become more difficult. Isn't there a danger that the educators of the Ecole d'Humanité may fail to adjust to it? "I don't think so," says Armin Luthi. "We maintain many contacts with former students, with teachers and specialists. And above all, we're working now with Ruth Cohn - which is a delight and a great enrichment for us all."

Psychotherapist and teacher Ruth Cohn has taken the step "from psychoanalysis to theme-centered interaction, from the treatment of individuals to a pedagogy for everyone." At the Ecole she works with the teachers in didactic and methodology groups. "Theme-centered interaction strives for a balance between the object, the ego and the group," explains Luthi. "When things go well for me and for the group, efficient learning is possible. What Ruth Cohn is doing in psychology and psychotherapy aims in precisely the same direction as what the Geheebs have been trying to do in education since 1910: a further development, concerned with a more human school."

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CENTRAL PARK EAST:
AN ALTERNATIVE STORY
by Deborah Meier

If any one school epitomizes the success of choice, it is Central Park East in New York City and the three sister schools that have sprung from it. And yet, says Ms. Meier, what's truly surprising is how few other schools have chosen to break free of the traditional mold.

In the spring of 1991, Central Park East will graduate its first high school students. Some of them will have been with us since they were 4-years old. From age 4 to age 18, they will have attended a school - located in East Harlem in the midst of New York City's District #4 - that many observers believe is as good as any school in the public or the private sector. A progressive school in the tradition of so many of New York's independent private schools, Central Park East is firmly fixed within New York's school bureaucracy. As its founding principal, I remain both ecstatic and amazed. Have we really succeeded?

For most of us on the staff and for many of our parents, well wishers, and friends, the success of Central Park East is a dream come true. A rather fragile dream it has been, tossed by many of the ill winds of this city's tumultuous politics. Today, however, we appear to be sturdier than ever. It would take an unusually strong storm now to uproot us or break us - or even to bend us very much. We are surrounded by a lot of people - within the district and city line - who would offer strong support if needed.

But it wasn't always so. We have had our share of luck, and we owe a great deal to many different people over the years. We know, too, that our success depended on the success of a district-wide effort to create a whole network of alternative schools. We are, in fact, just one of nearly 30 'options' that are available to families in District #4, aside from the regular neighborhood-zoned elementary schools.

In the fall of 1974, Anthony Alvarado, the new superintendent of District #4, initiated just two such alternatives: our elementary school and a middle school, the East Harlem School for the Performing Arts. Each year thereafter, the district supported the launching of several more alternative schools - generally, at the junior high level. These schools were rarely the result of a central plan from the district office, but rather tended to be the brain children of particular individuals or groups of teachers. They were initiated by the people who planned to teach in them.

It was the District's task to make such dreams come true. The details differed in each case. Most of these schools were designed around curricular themes - science, environmental studies, performing arts, marine biology. But they also reflected a style of pedagogy that suited their founders. They were always small, and, for the most part, staff members volunteered for duty in them. Finally, when the alternative schools outnumbered the 'regular,' Alvarado announced that henceforth all junior high schools would be schools of 'choice.' By 1980, all 6-graders in the District chose were they would go for 7th grade. No junior high had a captive population.

On the elementary school level, neighborhood schools remained the norm, though the district handled zoning rather permissively. The only schools of choice on the elementary level are the Central Park East Schools, the East Harlem Block School (founded in the 1960s as a nonpublic, parent-run 'free' school,) and a network of bilingual elementary schools.

Today, Central Park East is, in fact, not one school but a network of four schools: Central Park East I, Central Park East II, and River East are elementary schools that feed into Central Park East Secondary School, which enrolls students from grades 7 through 12 and is affiliated with Theodore Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools.

The Central Park East Schools were founded in 1974, during a time of great educational grief in New York City just before the schools were forced to lay off more than 15 thousand teachers and close elementary school libraries and at a time when the spirit of hope was crushed out of the parent movement and out of the struggles for decentralization, for teacher power, and for structural change. Progressive educators suffered particularly, both because people began to claim that "openness" was "through" (and discredited) and because many of the young teachers and programs that had carried the progressive message were hardest hit by the layoffs.

In the spring of 1974 when Alvarado invited me to build a school in one wing of P.S. 171, it seemed a most unlikely offer. School District #4 served a dismal, bitterly torn, largely Hispanic community. Still, I accepted. Who could refuse such an offer? After struggling for years to make my beliefs 'fit' into a system that was organized on quite different principles, after spending considerable energy looking for cracks, operating on the margins, 'compromising' at every turn, the prospect that the district bureaucracy would organize itself to support alternative ideas and practices was irresistible. I was being offered a chance to focus not on bureaucratic red tape, but on the intractable issues of education - the ones that really excited me and many of the teachers I knew.

But this was not a time for having large visions, and I didn't want to be disappointed. I met with Alvarado, began to collect some experienced teachers to help launch our effort, and gradually began to believe that he meant what he said. He offered to let us build a school just the way we wanted. The total allocation of funds (per-pupil costs) would have to be comparable to what was spent on any other school, and our teachers would have to meet the usual requirements of the city, state and union contract. Nor could we be exempt from any city or state regulations. Beyond that, however, the district would support us in doing things our own way.

We began very small and very carefully. First, there was the question of 'we.' Creating a democratic community was both an operational and an inspirational goal. While we were in part the products of what was called 'open' education, our roots went back to early progressive traditions, with their focus on the building of a democratic community, on education for full citizenship and for egalitarian ideals. We looked upon doing, perhaps more than peonage, as our mentor.

Virtually all of us had been educated in part at City College's Workshop Center under Lillian Weber. We came out of a tradition that was increasingly uneasy about the strictly individualistic focus of much of what was being called "open."

We were also unhappy about the focus on skills rather than content in many of the "modern," innovative schools - even those that did not embrace the "back-to-basics" philosophy. Many "open" classrooms had themselves fallen prey to the contemporary mode of breaking everything down into discrete bits and pieces - skills - that children could acquire at their own pace and in their own style. In contrast, we were looking for a way to build a school that could offer youngsters a deep and rich curriculum that would inspire them with the desire to know; that would cause them to fall in love with books and with stories of the past; that would evoke in them a sense of wonder at how much there is to learn. Building such a school required strong and interesting adult models - at home and at school - who could exercise their own curiosity and judgment.

We also saw schools as models of the possibilities of democratic life. Although classroom life could certainly be made more democratic than traditional schools allowed, we saw it as equally important that the school life of *adults* be made more democratic. It seemed unlikely that we could foster democratic values in our classrooms unless the adults in the school also had significant rights over their work place.

We knew that we were tackling many difficult issues at once. Because of political considerations, planning time was insufficient, but the district tried to make up for this by being extra supportive. Looking back, we were so euphoric that we had the energy of twice our numbers.

We purposely started our school with fewer than 100 students - in kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade only. At the superintendent's request, we recruited outside of the usual district channels, in part so that we wouldn't threaten other schools in the district and in part because one of Alvarado's goals was to increase the pupil population of the district and thus guard against school closings.

Families came to us then, as they still do today, for many reasons. Philosophical agreement on pedagogy was probably was the least important. Many families came because they were told by Head Start teachers or principals that their children needed something different, something special. In short, many families came to us because experts claimed that their children would have trouble in traditional schools. Some came because their children were already having trouble in other schools or because older siblings had had trouble in neighborhood schools in the past.

Some families came to us because they had heard us speak and just liked the way we sounded - caring (they told us later), open, friendly, committed. Some came because they had friends who knew us professionally, and some came because they were looking for a different kind of school for philosophical reasons. Yet even among those who chose us because of our presumed beliefs, there was often confusion about what those beliefs were. Some thought, for example, that this would be a parent-run school, and some thought we didn't believe in any restrictions on children's freedom.

In fact, one of our primary reasons for starting the school - although we didn't often say it - was our personal desire for greater autonomy as teachers. We spoke a lot about democracy, but we were also just plain sick and tired of having to negotiate with others, worry about rules and regulations, and so on. We all came together with our own visions - some collective and some individual - of what teaching could be like if only we had control. Ours was to be a teacher-run school. We believed that parents should have a voice in their children's schooling, and we thought that "choice" itself was a form of power. We also believed that we could be professionally responsive to parents and that, since the school would be open to parents at all times and the staff would be receptive, there would be plenty of opportunity to demonstrate our responsiveness.

Good early childhood education, we believed, required collaboration between the school and the family. This was a matter not only of political principle but also of educational principle, and it motivated us from the start to work hard to build a family-orientated school. We wanted a school in which children could feel safe. Intellectual risk-taking requires safety, and children who are suspicious of a school's agenda cannot work up to their potential. To create a safe school, we needed to have the confidence of parents, and children needed to know that their parents trusted us. It was that simple. Hard to create, perhaps, but essential.

We stumbled a lot in those early years. We fought among ourselves. We discovered that remaining committed to staff decision making was not easy. It was hard, too, to engage in arguments among ourselves without frightening parents and raising doubts about our professionalism. We were often exhausted - sometimes by things that mattered least to us.

By the end of the second year, I had made some crucial decisions regarding the organization and structure of Central Park East. These involved my leaving the classroom to become a somewhat more traditional principal. We have never entirely resolved the tensions over who makes which decisions and how. But the staff continues to play a central role in all decisions, big and small. Nothing is "undiscussible," though we have learned not to discuss everything - at least not all the time. This has actually meant more time for discussing those issues that concern us most: how children learn, how our classes really work, what changes we ought to be making, and on what bases. We have also become better observers of our own practice, as well as more open and aware of alternative practices.

As we have grown in our understanding and impractical skills, we have also reexamined the relationships between school and family. Today, we understand better the many, often trivial ways in which schools undermine family support systems, undercut children's faith in their parents as educators, and erode parents willingness to assume their responsibilities as their children's most important entertainers.

Although we have not changed our beliefs about the value of 'naturalistic' and 'whole-language' approaches to teaching reading, we have become more supportive of parents whose 'home instruction' differs from ours. We give ***less*** advice on such topics as how not to teach arithmetic or how to be a good parent. We listen with a more critical ear to what we say to parents, wondering how we would hear it as parents and how children may interpret it as well.

As we became more secure with ourselves and our program, the district was expanding its network of alternative schools. In the fall of 1974, we were one of two. Within a half-dozen years, there were about 15 'alternative concept' schools, mostly on the junior high level, were schooling had most blaringly broken down.

The district also dispensed with the assumption that one building equals one school. Instead, every building in the district was soon housing several distinct schools - each with its own leadership, parent body, curricular focus, organization, and philosophy. Most of the new junior highs were located in elementary school buildings. Former junior high buildings were gradually turned to multiple uses, as well. Sometimes three or more schools shared a single building. As a result, the schools were all small, and their staffs and parents were associated with them largely by choice.

By the late Seventies, Central Park East was so inundated with applicants that the district decided to start a s[illegible] annex at

P.S. 109. The district's decision was probably also motivated by the availability of federal funds for the purpose of school integration. While Central Park East has always had a predominantly black (45%) and Hispanic (30%) student population, it is one of the few district schools that has also maintained a steady white population, as large as about 25%. (The population of District #4 is about 60% Hispanic, 35% black, and 5% white.)

In the beginning, this ratio came about largely by chance, but the 25% white population in the school has been maintained by choice. In general, the school has sought to maintain as much heterogeneity as possible, without having too many fixed rules and complex machinery. The school accepts all siblings, as part of its family orientation. After siblings, priority goes to neighborhood families. In other cases, the school tries to be nonselective, taking in most of its population at age 5 strictly on the basis of parental choice, with an eye to maintaining a balanced student body. Well over half of the students have always qualified for free or reduced-price lunches, and some 15 percent to 20 percent meet the state requirements for receiving special education funds.

In 1980, the annex opened in P.S. 109 and served the same purposes and the same population as Central Park East I, although the new school was a mile and a half southeast of Central Park East I. It began as an "annex," serving two classes of 5- and 6-year olds. Within a few years, it was big enough to be designated a separate school. The parents and staff members selected their own director, Esther Rosenfeld, but they decided to continue to proclaim their connection to Central Park East I by calling their school Central Park East II. And the two schools continued to handle recruitment decisions jointly, to share staff retreats, to plan their budgets jointly, and sometimes to share specialists.

The demand for spaces still far outstripped available seats, and a few years later, the district decided to start a third school. This time the new director, Shelley Price, and her staff decided to call themselves by a new name: River East. They opened in the old Benjamin Franklin High School building beside the East River. The old high school had been closed, largely because of district pressure. It reopened as the Manhattan Center for Math and Science, and it housed, in addition to River East, a small junior high school and a new high school.

Thus by 1984, Central Park East had become three schools, each designed for about 250 students, each with its own individual style and character, yet united in basic ways.

Then, in 1984, at the 10th graduation of our founding, Theodore Sizer congratulated the school for its impressive history and asked, "Why not a Central Park East secondary school? Why not keep the good things going through the 12th grade?" We agreed. Our own study of our 6th grade graduates had persuaded us starting a secondary school was a good idea. Some of our critics had said that a secure and supportive elementary school would not prepare students to cope with the "real world." Our study of our graduates had proved them wrong. Regardless of race or social class, our graduates had handled the real world well. They had coped. The statistics we compiled amazed even us. Only one of our graduates, who were hardly an academic elite, had left school prior to earning a high school diploma. Furthermore, half of our graduates had gone on to college.

But our graduates had stories to tell. And their stories were not stories about being educated, but about survival. They told us stories that confirmed what Sizer had written about U.S. high schools in *Horace's Compromise*. But the stories our graduates told us were generally far worse than those Sizer chronicled, since he was often describing wealthy or middle-class schools.

We began negotiations with the district and with the city. In the fall of 1985 we opened the doors to Central Park East Secondary School, which serves grades 7 through 12. We are now back where we began, starting something entirely new. However, circumstances are not exactly the same as they were when we began Central Park East I. For one thing, we cannot avoid public exposure even as we muddle through our first years. Then, too, the obstacles that block the path of reforming a high school are harder to budge than those that face elementary schools.

For instance, the idea that an "alternative" high school means a school for "difficult" kids is firmly entrenched in the tradition of New York City high schools, and the anxiety about preparing students for the "real world" is more pressing than in elementary schools. Moreover, the Regents exams, course requirements, college pressures, and the usual panic about dealing with adolescents and their problems combined to make the task even more complex especially in light of New York's recently adopted Regents Action Plan, which runs counter to everything we and the Coalition of Essential Schools believe. With its increased number of required courses and standardized examinations and its greater specificity about course content, the Regents Action Plan leaves far less room for initiative and innovation at the school level. Another barrier is the dearth of experience with progressive education at the secondary school level. There is little for us to learn from and not much of a network of teachers or teacher education institutions that can provide us with support, ideas, and examples.

But we have a lot going for us, too. We have our three sister elementary schools to lean on and draw support from. We have the Coalition of Essential Schools and a growing national interest in doing something about the appalling quality of many public secondary schools. And, under its current superintendent, Carlos Medina, the district continues to support the idea of alternative 'schools of choice' for all children, all parents, and all staff members. We have also been receiving invaluable support from the citywide high school division and the alternative high school superintendent, who oversees a disparate collection of small high schools throughout New York City.

The oddest thing of all is that the incredible experience of District #4 has had so little impact on the rest of New York City. Here and there, another district will experiment with one or another of our innovated practices. But few are willing to break out of the traditional mold. Generally, their alternative programs are mini-schools, with relatively little real power as separate institutions and without their own leadership. Often they are open to only a select few students and thus, are resented by the majority. Sometimes they are only for the "gifted" (often wealthier and whiter) or only for those having trouble with school.

There are many possible explanations for this state of affairs, and we keep hoping that "next year" our ideas will finally catch on. Perhaps the fact that next year keeps moving one year further away suggests that many parents and teachers are satisfied with the status quo at their local elementary schools or that junior high passes so quickly that a stable constituency of parents cannot be built.

But the high schools, which remain the responsibility of the central board in New York City, are clearly in a state of crisis. The drop-out rate is appalling, the fate of many who do not drop out officially is equally devastating, and the decline in college attendance by black and Hispanic students is frightening. Perhaps the time has come for progressive education to tackle the high school again, to demonstrate that giving adolescents, and their teachers greater responsibility for the development of educational models is the key ingredient.

The notion of respect, which lies at the heart of democratic practice, runs counter to almost everything in our current high schools. Today's urban high schools express disrespect for teachers and students in myriad ways in the physical decay of the buildings, in their size, in the anonymity of their students, and in the lack of control over decisions by those who live and work in them.

Although the reasons for the recent national concern over high schools may have little to do with democracy, the current reform mood offers an important opening - if we can resist the desire for a new "one best way." We cannot achieve true reform by feral. Giving wider choices and more power to those who are closest to the classroom are not the kinds of reforms that appeal to busy legislators, politicians, and central board officials. They cannot be mandated, only facilitated. Such reforms require fewer constraints, fewer rules - not more of them. They require watchfulness and continuous documenting and recording, not a whole slew of accountability schemes tied to a mandated list of measurable outcomes.

Do we have the collective will to take such risks? Only if we recognize that the other paths are actually far riskier and have long failed to lead us out of the woods. Like democratic societies, successful schools can't be guaranteed. The merits of letting schools try to be successful are significant. But allowing them to try requires boldness and patience - not a combination that is politically easy to maintain .

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"TO LIVE (AND THUS TO LEARN) THESE TRUTHS)": TEACHING THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION

by Dave Lehman

The bicentennial of the United States Coalition has just passed, and as we enter the gate of this new year, there is no more crucial charge in the next 200 years to us educators, who are the torchbearers for each new generation, than to see to the full blooming of the democratic potential envisioned by our founding fathers, but yet to be realized. In Mortimer Adler's article in the December 1987 *Phi Delta Kappan* "We Hold These Truths", excerpted from his recent book by the same title - he urges our schools to guarantee that all future students will at least have read and understood the U.S. Constitution as well as the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights (Adler, 271). Although Adler states this is the "least to be expected" and that "much more might be expected," I share the concerns stated by Associate Editor Bruce Smith in his introductory editorial (Smith, 250) when he states his fear that "... we will be satisfied with knowing only the bare facts and strutting the trappings of our knowledge in parlor games, even as we advocate our responsibilities as citizens and let others shape the future of our nation."

It is well past time in our schools simply to expect more "reading" and "understanding" of our democratic processes - hasn't virtually every state in the union had this as a requirement for high school graduation already? No, we must actively and meaningfully engage our students in direct, participatory democracy in their schools. But, before going into the specifics of such a proposal for making our schools and our society as a whole fully democratic, let us at least correct some of the crucial errors still being taught (or by omission, not being taught) about the origins of our Constitution.

Iroquois Indians and "Forgotten" Roots of our Constitution

In September of 1987, being a two-day conference on "The Iroquois Great Law of Peace and the United States Constitution" was held at Cornell University which brought together constitutional scholars, lawyers, and traditional Iroquois leaders from across the country. (note - the full proceedings of the conference, entitled Indian Roots of American Democracy are available from Cornell University's American Indian Program. Professor Donald Grinde, author of *The Iroquois and the Founding of the American Nation* and a professor at Gettysburg College reported that his research into the origins of our Constitution reveal that the Albany Plan of Union (forerunner to the Constitution) may well have been a copy of the Iroquois Confederacy, and that such concepts as the union of the 13 original states, federalism, "decorum and democratic council" were all borrowed from the Iroquois, but for which they are yet to receive due credit. Grinde also "brought a major new revelation to the Cornell conference, one that for the first time placed the Great Law of Peace (of the Iroquois League of Nations) within the constitutional convention" when he stated: "One of the framers, John Rutledge, of South Carolina, who was chair of the drafting committee read portions of the Iroquois Law to the other members of the committee" (Johnson, 5 and 6).

Such revelations at the conference confirmed what had appeared earlier in the Northeast Indian Quarterly, where Bruce Burton had stated:

> The modern age of democracy had its origin in the vast recesses of this continent, and from here its principles and examples spread throughout the world to other nations. In its very essence it is an 'international' form of government based on the principles of natural equality among the races, the individual's right to property, and the mutual defense of those rights. The 'great experiment' as it has been called, was no 'experiment' at all - but a practicing, working system of pure democracy, stronger and more resilient in pursuit of its interests than any government created from the genius of humans. (Burton, 9)

And in the September 1987 issue of *National Geographic* where the editors had stated:

> Could it be that the U.S. Constitution owes a debt to the Iroquois? Benjamin Franklin cited their powerful confederacy as an example for a successful union of sovereign states, and contemporary accounts of the American 'noble savage' living in 'natural freedom' inspired European theorists such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau to expound the philosophical principles that helped ignite the Revolution and shape the Constitution. (*Nat'l. Geo.*, 370-371)

Again in the Fall 1987 issue of the *Northeast Indian Quarterly* several articles appeared on the subject and the list of "Selected Readings on Iroquois Contributions to the United States Constitution" was provided including the book - *Forgotten Founders: How the American Indian Helped Shape Democracy* by Bruce Johansen who also participated in the Cornell conference.

Upon reading the book, I was more convinced than ever of this glaring error in my own understanding of the roots of our Constitution. Johansen cited literally hundreds of documents in his research including the early writings of Franklin, Jefferson, Hamilton, Paine and others, as well as the Iroquois Great Law of Peace. He referred to such recent American historians as Felix Cohen, who wrote in 1952 - "... in their rush to 'Americanize' the Indian, Euro-Americans had forgotten or chosen to ignore, that they had themselves been influenced by Indian thought and action" (Johansen, 13). And to the classic 18th century work of early American historian Cadwallader Colden, the first to write, in English, first-hand accounts of Iroquois society -

> The present state of the Indian Nations exactly shows the most Ancient and Original Condition of almost every Nation; so, I believe that here we may with more certainty see the original form of all government, than in the most curious Speculations of the Learned; and that the Patriarchal and other Schemes in Politicks are no better than Hypotheses in Philosophy, and as prejudicial to real Knowledge. (Johansen, 38).

Johansen referred to the original speeches of the Iroquois themselves at various treaty councils, such as that of Canassatego, speaker of the Gray Council of the Iroquois when he addressed the Colonial delegates in 1794, saying:

> Our wise forefathers established union and amity between the Five Nations. This has made us formidable. This has given us great weight and authority with our neighboring Nations. We are a powerful Confederacy and by your observing the same methods our wise forefathers have taken, you will acquire much strength and power; therefore, whatever befalls you, do not fall out with one another. (Johansen, 62-63).

He referred to Benjamin Franklin's close study of the Iroquois and his admiration for their government:

> Indian leaders study oratory, and the best speaker had the most influence, Franklin observed. In words that would be echoed by Jefferson, Franklin used the Indian model as an exemplar of government with a minimum of governments. This sort of democracy was governed not by feat, but by public opinion and consensus-creating custom ... (Johansen, 87).

And Thomas Jefferson -

> Having admired Franklin so, it was not surprising that where Franklin laid down an intellectual thread, Jefferson often picked it up. Jefferson's writings clearly show that he shared Franklin's respect for Indian thought. Both men represented the Enlightenment frame of mind of which the American Indian seemed a practical example. both knew firsthand the Indian way of life ... it was impossible that that experience should not have become woven into the debates and philosophical new things that gave the nation's founding instruments their distinctive character' (Johansen,101).

Johansen's research led him to the following summary statement:

> The United States was born during an era of Enlightenment that recognized the universality of human kind, a time in which minds and borders were opened to the new wondrous,and the unexpected. It was a time when the creators of a nation fused the traditions of Europe and America, appreciating things that many people are only now rediscovering - the value of imagery and tradition shaped by oral cultures that honed memory and emphasized eloquence, that made practical realities of democratic principles that were still the substance of debate (and, to some, heresy) in Europe. In its zest for discovery, the Enlightenment mind absorbed Indian traditions and myth, and refashioned it, just as Indians adopted the ways of European man. In this sense, we are

> all heirs to America's rich Indian heritage. (Johansen, 125).

Thus, let us at the outset at least correct this aspect of the history of our U.S. Constitution, a history which Mortimer Adler does not mention, at least in the major excerpt taken from his recent book.

How Should We Teach the Constitution and the Bill of Rights?

I propose that if we are really serious about teaching future generations not only to 'understand' the Constitution, Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights, but to put such understanding actively to use as fully participating citizens in a democratic society, then we must go beyond requiring all of our high school students simply to read these documents and pass a test about their main ideas. We must actively engage our students, school staffs (teachers, administrators, paraprofessonals, support personnel, secretarial and custodial staff), and parents in the democratic running of our schools. Students must be immersed in a living democracy in small learning communities (schools). They must be engaged in making real decisions not only about their own individual education based on a variety of real choices, but about the collective life of their school community administrative, judicial, financial, all aspects.

This approach is not necessarily new, but has yet to be fully realized in our educational system as a whole. As John Dewey said in 1915:

> The conventional type of education which trains

> children to docility and obedience, to the careful performance of imposed tasks because they are imposed, regardless of where they lead, is suited to an autocratic society. These are the traits needed in a state where there is one head to plan and care for the lives and institutions of the people. But in a democracy they interfere with the successful conduct of society and government ... Responsibility for the conduct of society and government rests on every member of society. Therefore, everyone must receive a training that will enable him to meet this responsibility, giving him just ideas of the condition and needs of the people collectively, and developing those qualities which will ensure his doing a fair share of the work of government.
>
> Children in school must be allowed freedom so that they will know what its use means when they become the controlling body, and they must be allowed to develop active qualities of initiative, independence, and resourcefulness, before the abuses and failures of democracy will disappear. (Dewey, 303-304).

Mortimer Adler's recommendation that

> ... they (future citizens) will have read the three documents that are our political testament' sounds too much like the more-of-the-same mentality that seems so rampant in most of the current....educational 'reform' movement.

Edward Deci, professor of psychology at the University of Rochester, recently voiced his concern about this giant step backwards:

> There is no doubt that our educational system has problems, but many of the proposed solutions are likely to exacerbate them. Initiatives that establish stronger controls in education will result in poorer education ... When teachers are pressured and controlled to provide results, they respond with rigid, controlling behavior. This, in turn, lessens the students' intrinsic motivation and impairs their creative performance ... I think we need to support systems that encourage teachers to be innovative and self-determining and to promote

> innovation and self-determination in their pupils. By pushing harder with procedures such as standardized curriculums and competency tests, we are likely to end with less excellence. (Decl, 52-53).

Or, as professor Patricia Cross of Harvard University stated:

> The school reform movement of the 1980s focuses primarily on mechanical solutions that are imposed from the top and that can be implemented quickly. Tight control and careful specifications may define minimal standards, but they also stifle the spirit of innovation and experimentation that researchers are finding so essential to excellent organizations. (Cross 170)
> and to a democratic society!

The reality is that our schools continue to be fundamentally flawed in that they begin with a denial of our most basic democratic freedom, that of the freedom of choice. Thus, the primary living lessons, although not in any textbooks, of all who experience our education system are from the beginning, in fact, undemocratic. This situation is described by Smith Burke and Barr as follows:

> For nearly 90 percent of the families in this country, there are no choices in elementary or secondary education. Without choice,without parental consent, children and you (parents) are assigned to specific schools and to specific classes within these schools. The same situation exists for some teachers and administrators who are assigned to specific schools within a district.*This situation is both undemocratic and unAmerican...* [emphasis mine] (Smith, Burke, and Barr,5).

Thus, we must begin to teach the truths of our Constitution from the very way in which students, parents, teachers, and administrators are initially involved in their schools. As New Orleans teacher/administrator Robert Ferris has put it: "It is a very important democratic right that parents have all kinds of choices and options in which to educate their children' (Ferris, 8). But we must go beyond this simple beginning democratization of our schools less this individualizing and privatizing of educational choice miss the heart of democracy which is the collective dialogue of the community. Again, as Dewey pointed out:

> I believe that education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform ... that education is a regulation of the process of coming to share in the social consciousness; and that the adjustment of individual activity on the basis of this social consciousness is the only sure method of social reconstruction. (Dworkin, 30).

Schools must therefore be a living democratic experience for our future generations if they are to learn the Constitution. Making such changes as this will not be easy, but fortunately there are working models already available throughout the country. There is the work of the late Larry Kohlberg and his colleagues at Harvard with their efforts in 'moral development' and 'Just Community Schools'.

Secondly, as Thomas Gregory of Indiana University stated recently:

> Changing high schools will not be easy under the best of circumstances. But, thanks to alternative schools, we already know most of what we need to know to do it, working models of public high schools that have successfully made the transition exist. We call them alternative schools. Because they have been developed for this generation of students, they more naturally fit their needs rather than those of their parents or grandparents. Emulating these existing schools represents the high school's best hope of once again becoming a viable *social institution.* [emphasis mine] (Gregory, 33).

And one of the key features frequently found in such alternative school models is that they are run democratically. As the founder and principal of one such school - the 14-year old Alternative Community School in Ithaca, New York (a public middle school and high school of 215 students) - we have taught democracy directly through the day to day experiences of our staff, students, and parents. We hold weekly "All Schools Town Meetings," planned and run by a student Agenda Committee - one of more than a dozen standing committees dealing with everything from running the lunchroom and budget to a student Review Board (a type of student court) and Curriculum Committee. Our weekly staff meetings are organized and run by a staff Agenda Committee, and our monthly meetings of the Parent Steering Committee as well as the representative, overseeing Advisory Board (made up of students, staff, parents, and representatives from other district schools and community agencies) provides everyone directly affected by any decision in our school with an opportunity to participate in the making and implementing of that decision. This is where future generations can learn direct, participatory and representative democracy, and acquire the specific skills needed to be a fully functioning citizen in our democratic society. As Tom Gregory said, there is no lack of models of things for educators to try. But, if we are successful, what changes might this bring about in our society?

Toward Fulfilling Our Democratic Promise

Mortimer Adler's article on "We Hold These Truths," closes with a section on 'What Remains to be Done?'; suggestions about '... steps that should be taken to improve the Constitution' (Adler, 273-274). I agree with many of these 14 suggestions (actually posed as questions), and it is the eighth that is the heart of what I feel is so crucially needed in our next 200 years of striving to live the Constitution - '... to increase the participatory, as contrasted with the representative, aspect of our democracy' (Adler, 274).

In his excellent book, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, Rutgers University professor, Benjamin Barber states:

> It is one of the ironies of the American form of government that no uniform nationwide system of local participation has ever been instituted or even considered. Jefferson outlined a plan for ward government throughout the young nation that might have given it a participatory infrastructure from the onset....But most of the founders concurred with Madison in his distrust of direct participation and hastened to insulate the republics against its tumultuous populists by means of representation. (Barber, 268)

He goes on to make a strong case for finally overcoming the Madisonian mentality and adopting a Jeffersonian approach, offering several suggestions including a 'national system of neighborhood assemblies,' a 'national initiative and referendum process permitting popular initiatives and referenda on congressional legislation,' and 'the civic use of telecommunications for debate and discussion of referendum issues,' as well as nine other concrete recommendations for revitalizing our democratic citizenship. (Barber, 307)

Benjamin Barber, like Mortimer Adler, points out several things that could be done to correct some of the processes of our democratic system, such as "... removing certain liberal obstacles; representation, the party system, single-member legislative districts, and the separation of powers" (Barber, 308). And here again, the Iroquois can still instruct us as noted in the *National Geographic* article - "Though seemingly eclipsed by history, the confederacy and its form of government continued to function to this day, maintained by fervent Iroquois traditionalists, who adhere to the same Great Law of Peace that sustained their ancestors" (*Nat'l. Geo.* 373). In the words of Lakota (Sioux) Chief Luther Standing Bear, "America can be revived, rejuvenated, by recognizing a Native School of thought" (Johansen, xv).

Finally, Barber clearly states the challenge for democracy in our society in the 21st century in the preface of his book,

"To restore democracy to America - or to create it where it has never existed is a cosmopolitan project even if it is constrained by American parochialism. When Langston Hughes pleads for liberty in his impassioned poem 'Let America Be America Again,' he pleads on behalf of the human race:

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,
I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.
I am the redman driven from the land.
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek -
And finding only the same old stupid plan
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak
Oh, let America be America again -
The land that has never been yet -
And yet must be - the land where everyone is free.

The land that's mine - the poor man's, Indian's,
Negro's, ME -

There is one road to freedom: it lies through democracy. The last best hope now, as 200 years ago, is that America can be America: *truly self-governing and democratic, thus truly free*" (emphasis mine) (Barber, xvi).

We educators must get about this duel task of (1) correcting our teaching about the origins of our U.S. Constitution, and (2) making our schools genuine democratic institutions in order that today's youth, the very young people who are to become our democratic citizens.

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LEARNING, RELATIONSHIPS AND 'BURNOUT'

A Personal Report by Rosalie Bianchi

I knew something very different was happening at the Free School when I came here to teach in 1973. It had to do with the quality of the relationships I saw between teachers and children. There was an openness, a sense of trust and mutual respect. The relationships were very alive and so, different from the distancing I was accustomed to in public schools. In the interactions there was an acknowledgement of each person's role (adult/child, teacher/student) and a respect for these roles. Adults were clear and direct in their expectations of the children and I saw children respond with acceptance. I didn't see much whining or a barrage of questions like, "Why do you want me to do that?" And I didn't see kids just obeying blindly. If the child felt that the adult's expectations were unjust, there was room for discussion, but it depended on the child! Some children have the habit of questioning everything in a way that seems like a distancing device or reluctance to accept the adult's natural role. Other children may need to say no. So I am describing relationships that took each child's individual self into account and the adult's self also. There was an element of truth in the relationships, an acknowledgment of two individuals working together on the exciting process of learning. There was no technique I could plug into for handling a situation - all children are different, all situations are different.

The Free School building - a former Italian language parochial school

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Too often in alternative schools I've seen teachers behaving as peers with children, being almost being child-like themselves. While this seemed satisfying to the adults, the children were acting-out. There was something dishonest in these relationships, something unsaid. Maybe it's, "I'll let you have fun and I won't set limits and you'll be nice to me and we'll have a fun time". Children need to know what the limits are; they can have plenty of friends their own age. I felt basic needs weren't being met, especially the need for guidance from a strong supportive adult.

In the kind of relationships I see at the Free School, both adults and children are willing to learn from each other. The relationships are not static but growing, evolving. The persons involved are willing to take the risk of losing the relationship altogether. It takes openness and emotional maturity for an adult to have relationships like this.

When I first came to the Free School, I could see and appreciate the interactions but they were beyond me. It was as if I was asking myself to "be spontaneous." I had no experience with honest relationships. I had developed habits of suppressing emotions indiscriminately, of manipulating instead of being direct. Simply put, I didn't love myself enough to let others in. I preferred the distancing and the techniques of traditional school. This block toward intimacy extended to other parts of my life as well. But I knew instinctively that I had something to learn by staying in the Free School Community.

Rosalie and Cissie

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So my years at The Free School have been a turning within and an opening out, a journey of letting go of old negative behaviors (this is work!) and trying new behaviors and new ways of thinking in the context of relationship and in the context of community. The adults are actively working on being emotionally honest with themselves and each other. There is no divisive gossip of the kind that occurs in most institutions. At first the honesty seemed harsh to me. I think there is an implicit agreement in our society to be indirect, to express all the feelings to someone else and in many instances never communicate directly. It is as if we don't have the skills needed for intimacy. We have learned alienation as a way of life - alienation from our selves and from others. Children learn emotional distancing very young and the learning is compounded in school when they are with adults in an institution where the relationships are not honest.

I learned (and I am still learning) that when someone is angry, it is not my fault. I don't need to feel attacked and I am able to hear what s/he has to say. This allows me to be with that person. I have learned that when I want to communicate something important, I can do this in a way that will work. It takes knowing myself. This is not just the realm of the therapist but is the stuff of life! I believe this way of being is currently only being written about in the context of "humanistic psychology," whereas publications about "education" never touch it. But my experience tells me that emotional and cognitive growth are connected. I see a relationship between the kind of learning I have seen and experienced at the Free School- a combination of emotional and intellectual growth - and the learning and education that both John Dewey and Piaget write about. I see this connection every day in the practice of teaching and learning. John Dewey has said that theory needs to be developed out of practice. This article deals with a theory that I have developed from practice which has been clarified for me by the works of Piaget and Dewey.

Jean Piaget described two kinds of learning: one is learning in the strict sense in which knowledge is gained through direct experience, the learning of information and skills. The other is learning in the broad sense which is related to the deep kind of learning that I am writing about. This learning in the broad sense is an internal process of construction. Within each of us there is a system integrating incoming data with existing structures and ideas. This system assimilates new information and accommodates the existing structures according to the new information. It modifies itself in relation to events but it does not lose continuity.

A baby receiving her first toy tries to put it in her mouth, accommodating to it by adjusting her mouth to its size. She learns that it can't be swallowed, and modifies her understanding of objects to include edible and non-edible. She has assimilated the information and accommodated it to her inner idea of how things are. This baby, according to Piaget, is also seeking ways to achieve a balance between incoming data and ideas based on previous experience. He calls this balance which the child naturally seeks, equilibrium. This cognitive equilibrium is not a state of rest but "...a dynamic state with exchanges capable of building and maintaining structural order in an open system." (Piaget, *The Development of Thought, Equilbration of Cognitive Structures*) A child goes from one state of equilibrium to a higher state through a self-regulating process called equilibration. It is the process of assimilating and accommodating.

When a person experiences something which does not fit in with his ideas about the world, he goes into a state of unbalance -disequilibrium. The person, naturally seeking equilibrium, can do either of two things. He can return to a former equilibrium, in which case there is no cognitive growth, or he can assimilate/accommodate and reach a higher level of equilibrium. Piaget says that non-balance might be the driving force of cognitive growth; without it knowledge remains static. I have a hunch that sometimes adults get stuck in ideas about the way things are and do not experience the imbalance necessary to move to a higher level. They get stuck in doing the same things over and over again even though it is obvious that what they are doing isn't working. They often revert to a previous equilibrium, rather than try a new strategy and experience disequilibrium. Often, when kids get "stuck" in learning, they seem unwilling to feel the imbalance. Little children growing up experience this all the time; they need to do this in order to learn survival skills. When we grow up, we seem to lose this ability to assimilate and accommodate. We don't seem to be able to tolerate the mystery of life as small children do so easily.

One needs to be able to see the conflict and look for new solutions, try them out and experience imbalance. This inner conflict - imbalance - this risk-taking, is what I see us trying to do at the Free School. It is an opportunity for learning in the broad sense, and it's a major internal process that takes place in the school.

I am not describing a smooth and trouble-free process. When I first came, I had wanted to control interactions and make them fit my idea of how things should be, but I was in an atmosphere where imbalance was encouraged. I have gradually become more able to tolerate the variations. The process is a challenge: a challenge to be emotionally honest and accept the joy of relationship. In some way a deep kind of learning has taken place that is both emotional and intellectual, perhaps a learning in the broad sense that is fostered by the environment. I see the results of this learning in the adults and children around me. We are all on this journey together.

The external workings of the Free School are very much like other "alternative community schools." We have regular classes and the acquisition of skills is given high priority. Children become self-reinforcing learners. We have a monthly newspaper managed by the third, fourth and fifth graders. We go on week-long trips to a farm in the Berkshires and to a seacoast farm in Maine. Governance on a daily level includes a council meeting system where children can call a meeting to solve a problem. The afternoons are spent with children actively involved in music, carpentry, creative dramatics, story-telling, pottery etc. Because the adults are actively growing and changing , the children thrive in the resulting atmosphere. I have seen "turned-off," angry children turn themselves around and start enjoying school and life. They learn that they have a choice about their behavior, just as the adults are learning this also.

Learning that one has a choice involves healing the hurt that keeps the negative behavior going. How does one heal? Acknowledgement of the hurt is the beginning, the turning within. Children are able to to do this because the teachers are acknowledging their own hurt. The openness of teachers shows kids how to do this. Everyone has his own way. When this learning/healing begins, children who have been "stuck" begin acquiring skills rapidly. They are more open to life. Teaching is no longer a struggle. I believe that teachers experience "burnout" when they try to force someone to learn. What an impossible task. It deadens the relationship and creates alienation. When a child is open to being with people and enjoying life, learning then is as inevitable as growing.

This is education based on living experience, and it is made possible by adults who are willing to live with life's uncertainties, take risks, and see life in its actuality and potentiality; by adults who are willing to stay centered; by adults who are able to experience group and individual tensions and accept them as life - joyous and exciting. I believe this is what John Dewey meant in *Democracy in Education* when he said that schools are not a preparation for life; they *are* life, the kind of life where one is open to having experiences which are rich, and full of "wonder, chance and uncertainty." In John Dewey's words, we can experience the wholeness of life when we have accepted "...the oscillation between the surrender to the external and the assertion of the inner." It is through relationship that we can do this, that we can dance between the inner and outer worlds. How can there be "burnout" when something this dynamic is happening?

Rosalie Bianchi was a teacher at The Free School in Albany from 1973 until 1987. Her Master's thesis, a study of Piaget, Skinner and Dewey in the light of her experience at The Free School, is also included in this collection.

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS IN EARLY AMERICA

by Ron Miller

The struggle to make education democratic and responsive to children's developmental needs is almost as old as America itself. The hopes - and frustrations - of today's alternative educators were shared by previous generations, and it may be helpful to reflect on their experience.

Although America was born amidst a great burst of egalitarian idealism, social history teaches us that underneath the slogans and hoopla, there was from the start an elite class - merchants and later industrialists in the north, land- (and, at one time, slave-) owners in the south - with a vested interest in keeping democratic enthusiasm within manageable bounds. This group has been served by its lawyers and politicians, by its religious authorities, and, we must realize, by its educators.

Still, class analysis by itself does not explain the origins of our public schools and their alternatives. There was, and still is to an alarming extent, a deep-seated belief that children must be forced to grow up properly. The idea that childhood is a distinct stage of human life with its own rhythms and needs was only beginning to emerge at the turn of the nineteenth century. Children were considered to be small adults (notice how they were depicted in contemporary portraits). Schooling, except for the tiny minority who were groomed for the professions, was an insignificant part of socialization in agrarian society. Its only purpose was to drill students in rudimentary skills and religious and patriotic catechisms. If children couldn't sit still and learn, they were simply beaten.

The first educator to significantly challenge this prevailing belief was Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) in Switzerland. He recognized that children learn through activity rather than abstraction, that the school must be a carefully planned, nurturing environment, and that it can play an important role in improving children's adult lives. Pestalozzi's schools were visited by hundreds of observers, including a Scottish-American philanthropist named William Maclure. Deeply impressed, Maclure invited one of Pestalozzi's associates, Joseph Neef, to come to the U.S.

Both Maclure and Neef had high hopes that Pestalozzi's ideas would catch on more rapidly in republican America than in Napoleonic Europe. In 1808 Neef published *Sketch of a Plan and Method of Education* (the first pedagogical work in English in the new world), and in 1819 opened a school in Philadelphia under Maclure's sponsorship. He introduced Pestalozzi's radical innovations; instead of the accepted authoritarian approach. Neef saw himself as a friend and fellow learner of his pupils. He led them on field trips, encouraged them to think and question for themselves, and abhorred corporal punishment. He sought to make education relevant to the students' lives; he considered Greek and Latin to be a waste of time, but taught them, since they were essential for college admission.

Neef had initial success, but eventually his zealous egalitarianism and freethinking religious views tarnished his reputation. He went west to Kentucky in 1813 but failed. By

1816, Maclure wrote to Neef that he had lost his optimism about America's ripeness for Pestalozzianism.

In 1825, though, Maclure joined Robert Owen's utopian community of New Harmony, Indiana. Neef came in 1826, and along with two other Pestalozzians Maclure had brought over, conducted what must have been the most stimulating educational environment in America of its time. But the New Harmony ideology, which Neef shared, was socialist, atheist and abolitionist. On all three counts, Neef was disqualified from serious consideration by the public. Although he continued to teach in Ohio for six years after New Harmony's collapse in 1828, his ideas had little impact.

In rural Connecticut, however, a young schoolmaster named Bronson Alcott, already intuitively sensitive to children's ways of thinking and learning, came across Pestalozzi's ideas and heard of the New Harmony school. In 1827, Alcott's own school was acclaimed as one of the best in the country, and a liberal minister, Samuel J. May (later a leading abolitionist and Alcott's brother-in-law), was impressed with his method, which, said May, served 'to invite rather than compel attention, to awaken thought rather than to load the memory, and in one word to develop the whole mind and heart, rather than some of either.'[1].

But the parents in Alcott's town were not so pleased: why weren't their children being drilled and disciplined? Why did they *like* their teacher so much that they visited him for further discussions in the evenings? The parents opened rival schools which drained Alcott's. So in 1828 he went to Boston, where he - along with a whole generation of reformers - came under the inspiring influence of the Unitarian leader William Ellery Channing. In 1830 Alcott left for Philadelphia, where he studied European Romanticism and idealism, and in 1834 returned to Boston a full-fledged Transcendentalist.

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[1] Dorothy McCuskey: *Bronson Alcott, Teacher* (NY 1940) p. 49

Under Channing's sponsorship, Alcott opened the Temple School and attracted children from some of the leading families of the city. He was assisted by Elizabeth Peabody, Channing's secretary and a gifted teacher in her own right (after 1860 she was the leader of the kindergarten movement in the U.S.). Alcott used conversations and journal writing; he admired Socrates and Jesus, who taught by evoking the intellectual and moral qualities already inherent in the person. To Alcott, education meant the cultivation of the spiritual essence of every individual. Like Pestalozzi, Alcott provided a loving, accepting environment, and maintained discipline through his own fatherly presence and by cultivating in the students a sense of responsibility for the classroom community.

For a few months in 1835-36, the school flourished. Peabody's *Record of Mr. Alcott's School* attracted favorable attention (and introduced Alcott to Emerson, who became his lifelong friend). But Alcott was on a spiritual pilgrimage of his own, and seeing the uncorrupted children as his teachers, he led them on explorations of Biblical passages and theological themes. In December 1836 and February 1837, he published - over Peabody's objections - his two volumes of *Conversations* *with Children on the Gospels*. Joining the barrage of Transcendentalist literature which was just then emerging, *Conversations* was perceived as a threat to ecclesiastical authority and conventional morality. While Neef's mistake was to be irreligious, Alcott's was to be *too* religious! Newspapers ridiculed him. Peabody resigned. Even Channing was critical. Parents withdrew their children, and Temple School closed in 1838.

Alcott tried to organize another school, but when he admitted a black girl, and refused to dismiss her when white parents complained, he lost most of his other students. By 1839 he was down to five pupils - three were his own daughters, including six-year-old Louisa May. So Alcott learned what Prudence Crandall had found in 1833 when she tried to run an integrated - and then an all-black - school in Connecticut: New England was not ready for racial equality.

Other Transcendentalists conducted schools that were innovative but less threatening to the community. Henry Thoreau, with his brother John, ran one in Concord from 1839 to 1841. Although classroom instruction was rigorous enough to prepare the older boys for college, there was no corporal punishment (Henry had resigned from the town school over this issue), and there were regular field trips into the town and countryside; Transcendentalism always encouraged direct education - or inspiration - from life. This school was popular, but closed because of John's failing health.

In the same year - 1841 - the Transcendentalist commune

Brook Farm was established by George Ripley (who, like Alcott, had read Pestalozzi and been encouraged by Channing). The school was the most successful element of the experiment. A skilled and beloved faculty combined solid academic training with a variety of experiences on and off the farm. By all accounts, it was idyllic. But Transcendentalist idealism waned in the face of the muscle-flexing America that was emerging. Commerce, industry and westward expansion were booming. In 1846 the U.S. invaded Mexico. In 1850 the Fugitive Slave Law would be passed. In this atmosphere, Brook Farm seemed hopelessly romantic, and it finally closed in 1847.

So it was not a Neef or an Alcott, a New Harmony or a Brook Farm that would set the course for public education in America. It was a crusading lawyer/politician named Horace Mann. Ironically, Mann himself was influenced by Pestalozzi's work and Channing's moral fervor. He was even a quiet abolitionist. But he recognized that most Americans were not interested in having education cultivate the latent human qualities of every child. Schooling at the public's expense could only be sold as social insurance: with the country becoming urban and industrial, with large numbers of workingmen and then immigrants clustering in the cities, schools were needed to instill a sense of patriotic duty, a respect for authority, and habits of punctuality and thriftiness. In contract to Mann's sober, moralistic program, radicals such as Neef and Alcott seemed dangerously subversive.

Thus, in 1847, when Alcott offered to lecture at one of

Mann's teachers' institutes, Mann turned him down, because Alcott's views were "hostile to the state." Think about it! The most talented teacher, and most provocative conversationalist, of his generation was not allowed to contribute to public education in this supposedly democratic society, because his ideas were too democratic. Here, in microcosm, is the entire history of alternative schooling in America.

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FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF A USER

by Sam McPheeters

I have attended a wide and varied range of schools during my now almost complete high school years. Having moved from alternative to military, from public to "prep," I find myself in a position to draw some tentative conclusions from these experiences. There are definite differences, beyond the obvious ones, in aspects of the various educational systems. What interested me most were the contrasting attitudes of alternative school students and private school students.

My own feelings about learning also fluctuated during my schooling. As a child in my first school, which happened to be alternative (The Free School, in Albany, New York, from 1974 to 1979), I had almost no knowledge that any other form of education existed. However, in many ways it was this almost total assimilation into a less structured learning environment which later helped me to gain a good perspective on things.

When I left that school for the public (and later military) school system, I became very screwed up, and thus, when I attended my second alternative school (Shaker Mountain, in Burlington, Vermont, during 1983 and 1984), I became "disillusioned" with a structureless environment and yearned for the "discipline" of a "normal" school. When I finally made it back to the world of textbooks and lectures, I again grew weary of the system I was in and re-adopted my "liberal" views on education.

I have finally found stability in my present position, and, looking back on the zigzags of my schooling, I noticed that although most of my changes had been brought on by my immediate dissatisfaction (a longing for some utopia always around the corner), I had been offered a rare opportunity to witness a wide cross-section of schools.

The most noticeable of these different attitudes deals with the student's social and sex roles. I am dealing only with the alternative and "prep" schools, where the environment is, at least outwardly, relaxed. At the other high schools which I have attended, the students were too preoccupied with tension and violence (overt, like the city gangs of "tough" public schools, or covert, like the militaristic philosophy of the boys' academy I attended for a year) to notice any social pattern.

How people look at these spheres of education, and the students typical to those types of schools, are largely stereotyped. My present school, a private religious establishment, has a reputation (not altogether undeserved) for breeding "snobbish" and elitist students. My previous alternative school has had many reputations, some complimentary, some not so nice. The point, even if no other conclusion can be drawn, is that general hypocrisy (applying a standard to one school and not to another) exists concerning the public's attitude toward the student's behavior in the two types of schools.

All too often the alternative schools are blamed for the student's "rudeness" and poor attitude, whereas many of the private schools aren't held accountable in the least when their students develop into closed-minded socialites, interested only in whatever small group of friends they are involved with.

Obviously this is a vast simplification; many private school students are perfectly normal people. However, it is true that there is a certain percentage of kids in any private school who fit the "prep" school student stereotype perfectly; rich, spoiled kids not caring about the world, and not caring about their fellow students except in the basest, most artificially social way possible. By remaining silent when students spread gossip, pass notes and stab each other in the back, private administrations are giving the go ahead for kids, unequipped even to deal with each other (let alone the rest of the universe) on an honest basis, to continue to lead confused lives. By organizing artificial social events, needless rules, and restrictive dress codes, these schools are furthering the causes of discrimination. By limiting the student's ability to experience different ways of solving problems, education and lifestyles, ignorance and hatred are easily bred. Kids who exclude ugly and poor people can be easily taught to exclude on racist, sexist or religious grounds.

When presented with these problems, people at my school have asked me, "What can be done? After all," as they state, "This type of phoniness is only human nature. Why try and halt the inevitable?" Well, first of all, there is an alternative. Although a school government which relies as heavily on student input as most alternative schools do may have their fair share of problems, at least the democratic schools have the capacity to deal openly with socialization problems instead of repressing them under a curtain of ignorance. When faced with a student who is hostile or "rude" to the community, the alternative school works enough in the open to be able to address the problem in a realistic manner. While a private school may be able to punish its own 'rude' students, who in a 'prep' school ever addresses the problems of destructive rumors and closed circles of discriminatory friends?

There are many, many other differences between the two types of institutions, some of which I may yet have to pick up on, some in favor of private schools, some in favor of alternative schools. However, the problem of students' attitudes is one of the most noticeable and most important. Until many private schools claim responsibility for the messed-up attitudes of their students, or even acknowledge that this is a problem, they will be unwittingly releasing a lot of confused, repressed adults out into the world.

SAM MCPHEETERS was a junior sixteen years of age in a local private high school. at the time he wrote this article. During the time of his stay at the Free School he and another student published a book on local folklore which is still being used in the public schools. The summer after graduating from the Free School he spent three weeks in Panama studying primates as part of a research project of the School for Field Studies, a program of the Smithsonian, for advance college credit. He did this on his own initiative, one of only eight students in the program from all over the country. He is currently engaged in desktop publishing, and is working on writing another book.

COALITION AS COMMUNITY

by Chris Mercogliano

This article will be one long-time NCACS (National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools, also referred to as the Coalition) member's attempt (I'm currently in my second year on the Board) to come to some understanding of where the Coalition has been, where it finds itself now, and perhaps to come to a personal vision of where it could steer towards. To do this, I will be drawing extensively from the work of M. Scott Peck, particularly from his masterpiece on community, *The Different Drum*, as well as from Peck's mentor, Wilfred Bion, who did pioneering studies of group behavior at his Tavistock Institute in London. From Wilhelm Reich, a predecessor of both who made revolutionary discoveries about the nature of both individual and group function in the 1930's, 40's, and '50's, I will borrow the concepts, "contactlessness" and "the emotional plague", and I will be applying them to the recent, and to some unknown extent current, state of polarization within NCACS centered around the former executive director of the coalition.. I will also, where relevant, bring in the perspective of family therapist Salvador Minuchin, who helped develop the notion in the 70's that every family has a particular structure which enables it to maintain automatically its internal patterns of relating.

The scope of this article will be significant only if it is placed in a historical perspective. To this end, I will be taking Avrich's, *The Modern School Movement*, for information on the

Chris participating in morning warm-up exercises

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early history of alternative education, and then from interviews with Dave Lehman, currently Director of the Alternative Community School in Ithaca, N.Y., whom I have unofficially appointed historian of the free school movement from the '60's on. Interwoven throughout will be my own personal observations, recollections and conclusions based on my attendance at recent board meetings and conferences, particularly the April, 1989, national conference of the NCACS in Oregon. My intention here will be only to make statements of my own experience and not to judge, characterize, or violate the confidentiality of others whom I may refer to in the course of telling the story from my point of view.

Finally, in looking to the future, I find myself deeply influenced by the words of quantum physicist David Bohm, who is now applying his fifty years of exploration in theoretical physics to the social and environmental problems which threaten our continued presence on this earth. It is Bohm's conclusion that our outdated western model of reality based on the mechanistic science of the last several hundred years lies at the heart of a deepening planetary crisis, and that relying on it only serves to keep both individuals and groups of all kinds apart. I share his conviction that our only hope is to continue to create ways of coming together through what he terms, "group dialogue."

According to *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Fifth Edition,* the word coalition means, "the act of coalescing;" with coalesce defined as, "to grow together into one body, to combine together into one body or community." In other words, a coalition is by definition an **active** process rather than a static institution. It involves growing and changing - **combining**. The importance of Webster's use of the word **body** must not be overlooked. Coalitions are more than just conglomerations of ideas or ideals. They involve bodies, which means they involve our feelings as well as all of our "stuff" that we each and every one of us bring to bear on our actions. Lastly, coalition means **community** - again, by definition. All of which brings me to an in-depth discussion of M. Scott Peck's, *A Different Drum: Community Making and Peace.*

I found myself moved to reread *A Different Drum* while travelling by train to the national conference in Oregon with a group of kids from our school (The Free School, in Albany, N.Y.) in April, 1989. It proved to be a powerful preparation for my participation in the many board meetings as well as for the five day conference as a whole. I had been all too aware of the doubts and mixed feelings that I was bringing to Oregon with me - not surprising, considering the painful and unresolved split which had occurred within both the membership and the board of NCACS during the previous year over whether or not to remove the member we had chosen for the position of National Field Coordinator. Peck's thoughts on community and peace seemed to speak directly to the situation at hand

From the outset, it was clear that I was not the only one who brought anger, fear, or mistrust to that first conference board meeting. The feeling in the room was charged and cut right through the cold, clammy dampness that shrouded the first three days in Silver Falls. Fortunately, the NCACS president opened the meeting with the insistence that everyone put their hidden agendas on the table - an important piece of leadership undoubtedly prompted by her having also found herself at the center of the maelstrom for much of the past year - and everyone, it seemed, responded in good faith. My own agenda included anger towards all the key participants in the conflict for being either unwilling or unable to work the thing through, and toward the coalition president in particular, because of my belief that she had over time resorted to taking sides. By saying that to her directly, along with apologizing for a very angry letter that I had written her earlier, and then by being able to acknowledge to her that I realized the impossible difficulty of the role she had been asked to play, I was able to get clear with her and then continue.

How had this group - whose lives were dedicated to working with children in creative, compassionate, and humane ways and which had developed such a close-knit organization for mutual support - become so entangled in destructive and sometimes outright vicious infighting? was the question I wanted all of us to look at together. I announced that I saw no point in going ahead with any other coalition business until we had addressed this question and then had done whatever was possible to resolve the concerns of those who had been willing to attend the conference. I was absolutely steadfast in my conviction that the problems we were faced with could not possibly be charged to any one individual, but were instead the responsibility of the entire coalition, and indeed the result of many unresolved areas - interpersonal, ideological, territorial, and so on - within the organization as a whole as well as a statement of the coalition's inability to deal with an internal conflict of such major proportions.

Peck begins *The Different Drum* with the statement that community is currently rare. On the other hand, it is a word that is constantly being devalued through its over-use in today's language. It is a phenomenon, like electricity or love, which defies a one-sentence definition. He compares genuine community to a gem and says that it can be defined only by describing its many facets, while sooner or later we get down to a core of mystery.

> If we are going to use the word meaningfully we must restrict it to a group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some significant commitment to rejoice together, mourn together, and to delight in each other, making others' conditions our own.

Communities can have any number of forms and sizes, some being long-term and others only temporary in their duration. They can be centered around a shared location, e.g. a neighborhood or a dormitory; around a shared goal, e.g. a political action or a professional group; around a shared set of ideas or ideals, e.g. a religious group - and perhaps NCACS would fit in here - or around the desire simply to learn about community, as is the case in the community-building workshops which Peck leads around the country, and so on. Ultimately, Peck concludes, the essence of community is a shared spirit, where a feeling of peace prevails, and yet where the members of a group in community will from time to time struggle. The struggles may become intense, but they will have a productive rather than a destructive effect.

Like true coalition, true community is extremely difficult to achieve today because of our relentless clinging to what Peck terms a "tradition of rugged individualism," whereby we value our independence above all else and are loathe to reveal our weaknesses, preferring instead to project an image of having it all together. The difficult reality is that there exists a constant tension between what Carl Jung called "individuation" - the result of a maturational process whereby we become our own fully autonomous selves - and the interdependence with others upon which our survival depends.

> So we are called to wholeness and simultaneously to recognition of our incompleteness; called to power and to acknowledge our weakness, called to both individuation and interdependence.

Thus the problem - indeed the total failure - of the ethic of rugged individualism is that it runs with only one side of this paradox, incorporates only one half of our humanity. It recognizes that we are called to individuation, power, and wholeness. But it denies entirely the other part of the human story: that we can never fully get there and that we are, of necessity in our uniqueness, weak and imperfect creatures who need each other.

Peck includes these qualities in his model of community:

emotional honesty, inclusivity (it's always easier for a group to exclude), a commitment and a willingness to coexist when the going gets rough -"communities are groups that learn to fight gracefully," - decision making by consensus, contemplation (each member has a responsibility to "know thyself"), and healing through the safety to reveal our vulnerability.

Certainly no one was consciously trying to apply Peck's model in that initial board meeting that I began describing earlier, and yet looking back it seems to me that we haltingly and intuitively covered the same ground. Our presence in itself indicated our commitment and as each of shared in turn what we had brought with us to the conference, there was mention of vulnerability in one form or another. We quickly laid down a set of ground rules for resolving conflicts: one member, with the support of the entire group would serve as "vibes watcher", staying attuned to the feeling in the room especially during periods of intense struggle. When sensing that there was only escalation on both sides and that all listening had stopped, the vibes watcher would call for a minute or two of silence, while everyone would reflected on their own feelings and experience of what had just happened. At the end of the "time out", rather than launching headlong back into the fray, the discussion would begin with people sharing their reflections. There was also a general agreement to speak only for oneself, not to carry "unfinished business" out of the meeting and then engage in private conversations as a way of avoiding completing the issue, and we agreed to reach all decisions by consensus.

Interestingly enough, Peck states that genuine community is often initiated in response to crisis. He attributes the growth and success of Alcoholics Anonymous to their recognition of members being in a state of continuing crisis. Alcoholics refer to themselves as recovering, never as recovered. There was never any doubt among us as to whether or not this was a critical moment in the life of the coalition. Would it split into two or more separate organizations? Would long-term relationships be permanently severed? Was there any way to prevent the polarization from spreading further, or any way to heal the damage that had been suffered?

The words 'community' and 'communicate' come from the same root, Peck writes. The principles for good communication are the same as the ones for community, and because human beings have not yet learned how to talk to each other, we remain ignorant of the ingredients of genuine community. It seemed so evident to me that problems in communication, though certainly not the sole cause, were at the heart of the trouble between the National Field Coordinator and the NCACS members who had called for his dismissal. To avoid generalizations, to speak personally, and to listen wholeheartedly are three of Peck's rules for communication, and all three appeared absent to me during the year or more of escalating anger and charges and counter-charges. Seldom had anyone spoken directly with the person they were upset with; there had been a great deal of second and third-hand message-carrying on both sides; and never had an attempt been made at a face to face resolution of the conflict.

Peck believes that in certain situations people may unconsciously stumble onto the rules of community, but since they don't consciously learn them, they tend to fall into and out of community without any control over the process. Groups that have lost the spirit of community sometimes try to regain it by what Peck calls, "enemy formation," engaging in mob psychology and creating a threat that would otherwise not exist. It is perhaps, he says, the most devastating form of human behavior. Individuals as well as groups indulge in it, and it is a sign of community decay and death. True community actually ceases at this point, as the group gradually becomes more and more exclusive in order to deal with the supposed "us against them" situation. Enemy formation is invariably a self-fulfilling prophesy, and eventually the imaginary enemy becomes an actual one. It is just such a process which I believe developed within the coalition during the past year.

It is not within the scope of this article, nor do I think it possible here in any case, to unpack the details of what was done and said by and between the Field Coordinator and the others who became increasingly angry with him and how he performed his job. That rather large suitcase could only be handled by a face to face meeting between all those involved with the support of a loving group and perhaps an objective mediator. My concern is with the effect of this year of deteriorating trust upon the coalition itself. It is my belief that each of us who is concerned about what has already happened, what may still be happening, and what may well recur in the future if we fail to understand it, could do well to look at applying Peck's model to NCACS. And I would like to go still deeper at this point by examining both Wilhelm Reich's and Wilfred Bion's theories of group behavior as additional models for understanding the dynamics of ours.

Reich was a radical student of Sigmund Freud in the 1920's who developed his own school of psychotherapy based on principles such as the observation that a healthy sexuality is central to one's well-being and that repressed emotions are stored in the musculature of the body - which Reich called 'armoring' - thereby placing far-reaching limitations on one's ability to live fully. Modern society, believed Reich, places increasing demands on the individual to deny his natural impulses - particularly sexual or aggressive ones - by suppressing the flow of energy in the organism by means of a stiff body or a rigid belief system, with the end result being a feeling of inner loneliness which he called "contactlessness." On more than one occasion Reich was the object of a process where a group of blocked or "armored" people become envious and then destructive towards someone who is energetic and flows more freely than themselves. After being driven out of several European countries because of his attempts to change their policies towards the sexuality of adolescents in particular, Reich named this phenomenon, "the emotional plague," and said that it was unconscious and highly rationalized.

Based on his model of the human psyche which held that blocked natural sexual and aggressive impulses as well as repressed emotional expression resulted in the formation of a destructive 'middle layer,' he theorized that in groups, contactless people with potent middle layers would have a tendency towards banding together to act out their destructiveness - the mob psychology that Peck warns that groups are so prone to. Always there would be some form of social alibi, with the rationalization of a group ideology, as in the case of the Salem witch trials, or in today's 'right to life' movement. In addition, and as was certainly true in his case, Reich noticed that the emotional plague often takes the form of a specifically sexual defamation, with people projecting their fear of their own sexuality onto someone whom they instinctively perceive to be more 'alive' - freer emotionally - than themselves. Interestingly, Reich also noted that 'plague reactions' often have a distinctively political element where the specter of communism or its opposite, McCarthyism, are raised.

Reich spoke almost exclusively in a language that he inherited from Freud; today perhaps the word creativity could be interchanged with the term sexuality. The parallels that I see between Reichian theory and NCACS are these: an energetic and creative leader, originally with the title of Executive Director, later redefined as National Field Coordinator, aggressively encouraged the growth and development of the coalition and was then singled out for, among other things, 'redbaiting' other coalition members. The group of members who eventually called for his resignation had a very rational set of grievances - many of which I believed were of real substance - and yet in my mind, behaved quite irrationally - ultimately refusing to attempt a mediated settlement of the dispute. That this is a gross oversimplification of the situation should go without saying; nonetheless I think that there is a point worth considering here.

The study of the potentially irrational behavior of groups became the life work of Wilfred Bion, beginning with his service as a British military psychiatrist during the second world war. Within any group, according to Bion, two groups are actually present, which he named the 'work group' and the 'basic assumption group.' On the one hand, the work group is an aggregation of individuals who come together to do something. In order to accomplish the agreed upon task, cooperation - which involves thought, maturity, and organization - is required. On the other hand, discovered Bion, in a group setting every adult has a tendency to regress to 'mechanisms typical of the earliest phases of mental life.' Group members find themselves caught up in 'emotional drives of obscure origins' which often get in the way of reaching the desired goal. In other words, the group within the group is represented by all of the feelings and motives existing outside of awareness that each member brings in with them.

Bion noted that sooner or later every group attempts to avoid its task by unconsciously agreeing on certain 'basic assumptions,' behaving as if they had a reason other than the stated one for being together. He labelled three different basic assumption groups: the dependency, the pairing, and the fight/flight group. 'Alternative' groups in general are most prone to the latter, and it is that one which I think is most relevant to NCACS.

A fight/flight group is one that has begun to act as though its purpose is to either oppose something or to get away from it, or a combination of the two. The group depends on its leader to make sure there is something to fight or flee, and if that leader fails to do so, the group members may eventually turn on it as the cause of their anxiety. When flight is the predominant assumption, the group will tend to avoid troublesome issues and problems. When a group is in a fight mode, it will automatically assume that there must be either an external or an internal enemy. According to Peck, there is an inevitable stage in the growth of community where a group will start behaving like a bunch of amateur psychotherapists and preachers, all trying to heal and convert the others, which invariably leads to a process of internal fighting, though individual members tend not to see it as such.

In any case, claimed Bion, every individual has a 'valency' - the involuntary combination of one person with another for sharing and acting on a basic assumption. The key is for each of us to become aware of our particular valencies and then find a way to use them positively in order to accomplish the stated task. My most compelling valency is certainly the aforementioned healing and converting, arising from a childhood desire to be liked by everyone and have everyone around me be happy. This valency has the potential to enable me to play a valuable role in the group because of my drive to find a solution to the conflict, as well as the danger of my wanting to avoid the painful feelings involved thereby preventing any true resolution from occurring. Very tricky indeed.

Once again, the parallels to NCACS are almost too numerous to mention. It will be most useful here, I think, to continue to look at the games that a group like NCACS can play with its leader and vice versa. In considering how it came to pass that the coalition chose to hold its national field coordinator responsible for its recent troubles, I am reminded of a precept of structural family therapy which holds that a family experiencing difficulty coping with its internal stress will tend to focus on one member as the "identified patient" within the therapy session. Hard as the therapist may try to shift the focus to the family as a whole, there will always be a tendency for the others to blame the *problem* individual. Matters are complicated still further by the likelihood that the identified patient will unknowingly act out the dysfunctional aspects of the family as a whole. As I have said throughout this article, it is time for the NCACS family to do some careful self-examining.

The history of the alternative school movement, going well back into the nineteenth century, is the story of a succession of gifted and diverse individuals very few of whom ever managed to live out their ideals with each other for sustained periods of time. Originators of anarchist Modern Schools made numerous attempts to do this, organizing themselves into "colonies" with their schools at the center, only to see them dissolve - often sooner rather than later - because hardened schisms developed over recurrent themes that can traced to the present day: over political ideology; over the question of whether schools should be political and act as agents of social change, or non-political and internally democratic, controlled by the participants alone; and over educational philosophy - for example, a structured environment versus a non-structured one, intellectual learning versus experience-based learning; or coercion versus non-coercion. It should be noted that the schools and collectives that were adamantly participant-controlled like the Stelton School founded by Nellie Dick, who insisted that her students not be indoctrinated politically, were the longest lived. Nellie's school endured quietly into the early sixties when as, Paul Avrich points out in The *Modern School Movement*, a "new" movement to create schools and communities outside of the existing social order sprang up, largely unaware of the rich history of its predecessors.

It didn't take long, according to Dave Lehman, an NCACS advisory board member and early leader in the sixties' and seventies' version of the alternative education movement, for the various dichotomies to heat up anew. Lehman recalls a "gathering" - they wouldn't be called "conferences" until things became more organized in the mid-seventies - in Northern California in 1968 or '69 sponsored by the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter*, at which John Holt and Jonathan Kozol squared off in a debate over the issue of whether or not schooling should be politicized. Kozol drew the line clearly in his book, Free Schools, insisting that schools become a means of radical social change; while John Holt steadfastly maintained his belief that it was radical enough to teach kids non-coercively, building instead on their innate creative potential and desire to learn, and that education should not become identified with any political movement. The same debate raged on in similar 'gatherings' on the East Coast in places like Boston and Albany in the early seventies. I remember one that took place at a conference put on by The Free School at the State University of New York at Albany principally between Kozol and Herb Snitzer of the Lewis Wadhams School, which closely adhered to the Summerhill model.

Finally, at 'The Education for Change' conference held in Chicago in 1975, the by-laws for an actual alternative education organization, to be called the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools, were written. Dave Lehman was a member of a small committee which worded the coalition's preamble and statement of purpose - currently a source of renewed debate - and remembers that the setting, as well as the composition of that by-laws committee, had a strong influence on the philosophy and structure adopted by the group at that time. Apparently, while the conference was proceeding, an event occurred which deeply affected its tenor: police in Chicago killed a Puerto Rican youth whose brother attended the alternative school which was hosting it. Lehman also reports that there was no representation on the committee by anyone who believed that education should be strictly non-political. The combination of these elements resulted in NCACS adopting a decidedly political orientation towards its function.

Lehman was able to recount for me numerous other examples of times and places where the many dichotomies of the alternative school movement arose in one form or another. My focus here, however, will remain on the political, since that is the one that I think contained the most explosive energy in the recent conflict which has brought the coalition to the splintering point. Along these lines Lehman remembers that at an NCACS board meeting in San Francisco eight or nine years ago, while serving on a committee this time to rewrite the by-laws, he came into a certain amount of disagreement with another board member (who is currently NCACS president) over the anarchistic - 'let's change the rules as the need arises'/democratic - 'how we define ourselves is important in terms of the future' dichotomy. Lehman points out that no splitting occurred over the issue, everyone choosing instead to stay engaged in an on-going dialogue and - not without some fairly heated struggle - arrive at a mutually acceptable resolution, hugs and all. Such a scene as this brings me back to Peck's principles for community-building and community-maintenance.

Community, states Peck, is an alchemical process whereby a group is able to transcend its individual differences by acknowledging them and agreeing to accept them as they are, and only then to transform them into a powerful harmony . This mutual transformation cannot take place until the ground has been prepared.

According to Peck, there are four stages in the development of genuine community (not that every group that becomes a community follows this formula precisely): **Pseudo-community, Chaos, Emptying,** and **Community.** Pseudo-community refers to the initial response of the group to unconsciously try to fake intimacy and minimize the potential for conflict by speaking in generalities and concealing feelings, and by tacitly discouraging the expression of individual differences.

Chaos is an intermediate step where individual differences come out into the open, and the group moves to obliterate rather than continue to conceal them. Repeated attempts are made to change and convert each other, to convince the others of the right idea or the right way. Chaotic fighting invariably breaks out as the healers and converters try harder to heal and convert while their victims get their fill and begin trying to heal and convert the healers and converters. Everywhere members can be found attacking each other as well as their leader. Eventually the group will become uncomfortable with this kind of unconstructive struggling and some form of "escape into organization" will occur as a response to the feeling of despair because the process seems to be getting nowhere. The alternative to organizing into committees, activities, etc. is the stage called Emptiness where the group decides, again unconsciously, that it is safe to let down individual defenses and reveal pain or anger as well as feelings of vulnerability or weakness. By emptiness, Peck means the removal of barriers to true communication. It is often a painful process - involving a series of little deaths or surrenders on the part of many individuals as well as a feeling of the whole group together approaching some kind of dying - and yet it is an absolutely necessary bridge between chaos and community.

It is Peck's profound belief, which I embrace wholeheartedly, that in any group which has formed to accomplish something together, community-building must precede problem-solving, and once a state of true community has been reached, it is imperative that the group remain open to continuing in a state of ongoing tension: over size, structure, empowerment and leadership, inclusivity, intensity, commitment, individuality, task definition, and ritual. In other words, once created, a community needs to take on the additional responsibility of maintaining itself. Because of everyone's opposing drives to both be individuals and to belong, there will always be divisive anti-community forces at work. Therefore groups will naturally tend to flow into and out of states of real community. While external service may be a group's ultimate task, its first priority must be a shared awareness of its own state of community health along with a commitment to deal with problems as soon as they arise.

Reflecting again on the Oregon conference, I can see a great many examples of how we unknowingly and repeatedly bounced back and forth through Peck's four stages of community, sometimes skipping one or another of them. It seems to me that we bypassed Pseudo-community in that initial board meeting, in response both to the perceived crisis and to the firm leadership of the NCACS president. I would say that we then spent the next couple of days in a severe state of Chaos, breaking down into "feeling meetings" and "healing meetings," or just joining into conference activities like the trip to the hot springs at Breitenbush. Over and over, when the needed "emptying" would begin to occur, I observed the tendency of someone in the group to insist that we get on with or back to the agenda of that particular meeting, or announce that time was up, or if all else failed, just change the subject altogether. One late-night session felt so deadening to me, with a core of people utterly determined to grind their way through coalition business, that I had to leave. The next morning, at the beginning of the final meeting of the outgoing board, I found myself muttering out loud that I thought that the whole thing was entirely hopeless and that we should all just go home. Once again, I found that I wasn't alone in my feeling.

Later that morning the emptying began again in earnest, with support for the process rippling through the group like a wave, and carrying over into the evening session as well. We were able to mourn together with the outgoing National Field Coordinator; the conference coordinators felt safe to fully express their frustration over what they felt to be a lack of support for their efforts to put on a successful conference; a former board member who is no longer associated with an alternative school gave voice to his fear that he no longer had any standing within the coalition, and even left in anger when he felt that the group was only avoiding the issue that he repeatedly raised regarding power and empowerment within the organization

- then returning to find that, much to his amazement, there was a great deal of agreement for his position.

It was absolutely tangible when the emptying was complete and we had reached the level of community: the atmosphere in the room began to sparkle. When we finally agreed as a group to 'get back to business,' we cut cleanly through the remaining agenda like a hot knife through butter. At the closing membership meeting, one older coalition member noted aloud that never before had he seen such a large and diverse group of children coexist so peacefully for such a long period of time - all while many of the coalition's older students and adults were so busy thrashing out the skills needed for building the community that was able to so lovingly contain their energy.

Maintaining such a community, I realize - and Peck so pains-takingly points out - is no small task. Certainly matters are further complicated by the fact that the coalition is a very large group which is also wide spread geographically, and the opportunities for meeting in person are few. Nevertheless, I believe that the potential for NCACS to exist as a form of genuine community is a reality and not some naive fantasy; indeed, I believe that it is a necessity if we are to be a truly effective force either for each other or in the world; and I believe that the experience in Oregon confirms this. What is called for now is for the entire coalition to make community - maintenance a first priority, and to develop creative solutions to its unique problems of numbers and geographical size.

In closing, I would like to turn towards the future, borrowing freely from the recent writings of quantum physicist, David Bohm. As did M. Scott Peck with the concept of community, Bohm takes the overworked term "holistic" to its source. All parts of the universe are fundamentally interconnected, forming an unbroken flowing whole, claims Bohm, while continuing to extend the work of the late Danish physicist, Niels Bohr, who in the 1920's coined the phrase "quantum wholeness," by which he meant that the world of the atom is seamlessly interwoven - not a mere collection of independent parts as was previously believed by western science. This seemingly radical proposition, once almost categorically rejected in the West as being "mystical," or left wing, or too far out, is now being empirically confirmed in practically every branch of modern research.

Moved to apply his quantum theories to the field of human relations, Bohm forged a lasting friendship with the Indian philosopher, Jiddu Krishnamurti, who maintained that all relationships must be viewed holistically because the cosmos has no fundamental divisions. Each individual consciousness is a manifestation of the whole of human consciousness, with all its history, perceptions, and interactions with nature. In the mid-sixties, Bohm came out with the concept, "implicate order," meaning that consciousness is woven implicitly into all matter and matter is woven out of consciousness. For example: on an atomic level, paired particles separated in space appear able to communicate with other - as in experiments with superconductivity where electrons at very low temperatures begin to move in unison, even around obstacles in the material in which they are travelling; on an individual level, the state of mind affects the health of the body and vice versa; and on the societal level, where we are in grave trouble, wracked by divisions between groups and individuals and between humankind and nature, because we fail to realize our interconnectedness, relying instead on an outdated Newtonian model which held that the universe is a like a machine comprised of separate, unrelated parts. We cling tenaciously to our differences, refusing to acknowledge that this 'unconscious metaphysical assumption' is the very source of the problem.

The end result of this fragmented world view, according to Bohm, is that people and groups think of themselves as separate atoms, failing to realize their affect on the whole. When their views conflict, as in the abortion dilemma, the two sides are unable to communicate with each other, both blind to the larger picture: and each, instead, perceiving the other to be basically evil. We even end up with a situation where the groups with the highest social ideals end up merely adding to 'the general cacophony of organized groups vying to solve the world's problems.'

The solution, Bohm believes, involves applying the quantum mechanics of superconductivity to the realm of human interaction:

> If you have a large number of particles at low temperature, each particle will be governed by a common pool of information. It's like dancers on a stage who share a common pool. But, as the temperature rises, this pool

> breaks up until there is practically only one pool per particle. So all the particles seem independent and tend to act independently, bouncing off each other at random. The holistic aspect only comes out when you lower the temperature.

The need today is for people to learn to "lower the temperature," to establish through a process of dialogue a kind of social superconductivity, where people begin to suspend their own beliefs and listen to other people's, so that everybody's beliefs are held by the group as a whole, thereby creating Bohm's common information pool. Dialogue lowers the temperature enough that when one person listens to another, what they say becomes part of that other. Bohm writes that

> We need a kind of social enlightenment to take place. In the past people have developed ways to foster individual enlightenment, a higher intelligence for the individual through meditation, or mystical insight, or what-have-you. But we haven't worked on ways to develop a higher social intelligence.
>
> To do that you need a situation in which people can talk together freely without a specific agenda or purpose to guide the proceedings, and you need a group large enough to develop a number of subcultures. If two people get together with different views, they will generally avoid the real issues. They will protect their separate information pools by avoiding connections that will agitate them. But when you have twenty or thirty people, there are bound to be subgroups wherein those deeper issues will come up. It's not controllable anymore. Eventually the dialogue is going to touch an individual's non-negotiable assumptions, which will liberate high energy.

For Bohm, dialogue is perhaps the last chance for humanity to turn around the devastating effects of the deadly, spreading fragmentation of human consciousness on the planet.

I have chosen to focus primarily on the work of Peck and of Bohm because both men propose virtually the same solutions to the problems of NCACS - which ultimately are merely a reflection of those of the larger society - and each uses a quite different idiom to describe it, each arriving at it from a seemingly separate area of expertise. Call it community, or coalition, or dialogue: regardless of its name, the process needed to enable us to insure that our children reach their full potential, which is their birthright, does not come easily to us. Much struggle and many hard lessons are required; yet we must, I believe, honor this process of mutual transformation because our children are the future of the earth.

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HOMESCHOOLING AND JOHN HOLT'S VISION
by Pat Farenga

John Holt was born into his fairly affluent family in 1923. He was sent to some of the "better" private schools and eventually graduated from college with a degree in Industrial Administration ("Whatever that means" John would always add after saying that). In his later life John didn't like to reveal his alma maters because

> I have come to believe that a person's schooling is as much a part of his private business as his politics or religion, and that no one should be required to answer questions about it. May I say instead that most of what I know I did not learn in school and indeed was not even "taught?"

Upon graduation John found the United States Navy needed his services to help fight World War Two. John was a lieutenant on the USS Barbero, a submarine that fought in the Pacific; he served a three-year tour of duty. After the war John felt nuclear bombs made war suicidal for mankind and he joined the United World Federalists, an organization that seeks to bring peace to our planet by establishing one World Government. John lectured for six years on their behalf and became the Executive Director for the New York branch of World Federalists. Dissatisfied with what he perceived as their increasing ineffectiveness, John left the organization in 1952, spent the next year bicycling around Europe, then went to visit his family in Colorado. It was there his sister Jane suggested John try teaching, urging him to visit the Colorado Rocky Mountain School, which had just opened. John went there to visit one day and liked it so much that he began teaching. The school was unusual for its time because it was co-educational and both students and faculty did almost all the manual work of the school.

John taught in Colorado for four years and decided to move to Boston to experience city life again. He got a fifth grade teaching position in Cambridge and met faculty member Bill Hull, who became a colleague with John and shared his interest in children. They decided to observe each other's classes, one sitting back while the other taught. John's memos from his ongoing observations form the core of his first two books. Eleven years of teaching provided John with the notes and journals that finally got published, after several rejection notices, as *HOW CHILDREN FAIL*. Today this book and the one that followed, *HOW CHILDREN LEARN*, have combined sales that exceed a million and a half copies, a remarkable feat for any books about education.

What is it that John expresses that so inflames discussions about school?

There are two versions of the reason, a short one and a long one. The short version is two words: Trust Children. The other version is contained in all of John's books. Let me supply you with something in-between.

As they worked together John and Bill eventually decided to frame their work in the classroom with the question, "Where are we trying to get and is this thing we are doing helping us get there?" Clearly they wanted their students to be better learners and they tried all sorts of things to help them get there. John writes about ingenious ways he invented of using Cuisinaire rods for math, playing twenty questions to develop reasoning skills, using a balance beam for weights and measurements, all sorts of approaches to problems he thought his students were facing. But the endless cycle he noted from his first days as a teacher repeated itself once again: He taught but they didn't learn. Sure, some of them passed his tests but that didn't mean anything if they couldn't, and most couldn't, at least remember a week from now what was on the test.

First John and Bill thought the reason so many children in their classes learned so little was that they used such bad thinking and problem-solving strategies. Eventually John saw it differently. If we, and not the child, choose the task, then they think about us instead of the task. John meticulously details in *HOW CHILDREN FAIL*, how it is their position as teachers, which is to say givers of orders, judges, graders, that is the source of the children's strategies. If the children can somehow get the answer the teacher wants, be in a class situation or on a test, once they've provided an answer, they are out of danger. The tension is past. The teacher no longer threatens, fear of not having an answer, or of having the wrong answer, or of being ridiculed before classmates, goes by. Teachers, not math, not reading, or spelling, or history are the problem that the children design their strategies to cope with. Why does this happen? Because of fear.

Fear in the classroom. Most adults scoff at the idea. "What's a kid got to be scared of? You don't see other kids crying about going to school, do you? What are you, a wimp?' But we forget what it is like to be a child. We find it hard to remember life as it looks four feet off the ground. 'There are very few children who do not feel, during most of the time they are in school, an amount of fear, anxiety and tension that most adults would find intolerable; it is no coincidence at all that in many of their worst nightmares adults find themselves back in school.'

John decided the prime reason children act stupidly, don't learn, or misbehave is because of fear, usually the ever-present fear of failure. Ask any sports figure, actor or politician what makes them choke in front of a group and the answer is fear. Studies show that anxiety and fear can actually create perceptual disturbances such as blurring of vision and loss of hearing. Can this be the root of our recent discovery of 'learning disabilities?'

Fear dominates the classroom environment in thousands of subtle ways, most of them disguised as helpful 'motivation,' some of them not disguised at all, and all of them coercive. John felt the error of 'progressive educators' is that they thought there were bad ways (harsh, cruel) and good ways (gentle, persuasive, subtle, kindly) to coerce children. However there is a great difference between setting a goal for oneself and doing difficult and demanding things to achieve it, and doing something, in the case of school usually something uninteresting to the student, simply because someone tells you you'll be punished if you don't. In this book, John forcefully shows us how whether children resist such demands or yield to them, it is bad for them; and that the idea of painless, nonthreatening coercion is a illusion. John writes, "Fear is the inseparable companion to coercion and its inseparable consequence.

Fear is not all. John notes how boredom and resistance cause much activity in school as fear. Many of the tasks given to children in school are busy work in the purest sense of the word. If a child can properly do five division problems, why must he do twenty-five? If we think we must force children to learn, we are grossly mistaken, but this is the primary assumption of our school system. For many people education is not primarily concerned with learning, but with discipline. A school where children learn but appear to be undisciplined is therefore failing in its task, and this is why so many of our finest teachers are fired, as John Holt was. In *HOW CHILDREN FAIL* John writes:

> The idea that children won't learn without rewards and penalties, or in the debased jargon of the behaviorists, "positive and negative reinforcements," usually becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. If we treat children long enough as if that were true, they will come to believe it is true. People say to me, If I weren't made to do things, I wouldn't do anything.
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> This is the creed of a slave.
>
> You may believe that of yourselves, but I don't believe it. You didn't feel that way about yourself when you were little. Who taught you to feel that way? To a large degree it is school. Schools teach it because, believing it, they can't help acting as if it were true.
>
> The seminal questions teachers should always be asking is, "What do we do to help or prevent learning?" This is seldom asked because it is assumed that unless there's something wrong with the student, all teaching produces learning, so all we need to think about is what children should be made to learn.

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Why do we presume that we can say what anyone must know? How can we say what a child wants to know is less important than what we want him to know? Even if we could all agree on what the curriculum should be, it still wouldn't work, because our knowledge of ourselves and the world is constantly changing, today faster than ever. Who can say what we need to know ten years from now? Our laws, our physics, our astronomy, our science, of ten years ago has changed considerably. Many things once considered textbook facts have to be changed every year due to humankind's curiosity. We don't need fact-splitters for the future, we need able learners, and our schools are failing in their chosen task of educating the masses. This is because schools do not encourage real learning, which happens when children discover what they most want to know, instead of what we think they ought to know. Teachers need to be geared to the student's learning schedule, not the state's learning schedule.

The state's learning schedule and most of the school bureaucracy is enforced by administering tests on a regular basis. The true purpose of tests should be so the one taking the tests can discover deficiencies and move towards improving them. Tests are designed by teachers to show these deficiencies, but instead the school system uses tests for a different end, as measures of intelligence and aptitude skills.

Never losing sight of the right to question what we are told, John maintains there are two real reasons why we test children: the first is to threaten them into doing what we want and the second is to give us the basis for handing out the rewards and penalties on which the educational system - like all coercive systems - must operate. Struggling with the inherent difficulties of a chosen or inescapable task builds character; merely submitting to a superior force destroys it.

Do we want to turn out intelligent people or clever test takers? How can we foster a joyous, alert, wholehearted participation in life if we build all our schooling around the holiness of getting "right answers?"

Besides this, why do we presume, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that the vast amount of knowledge and ability in each of us can be reduced to a number or grade? These numbers and grades are indelible marks on our lives that the school system can turn over to anyone, such as the government or prospective employers, and these marks can follow us forever. Many teachers' recommendations are written in secret and never seen by the student, so even the veneer of grades may be undermined by a careless recommendation. The student has little or no rights in this matter. As Edgar Friedenberg says, the student owes the school everything and the school owes the student nothing. This fact was upheld in a recent court case. Discovering that their children, upon graduating from high school, could still not add, subtract or write their own names properly, the parents sued the school. The court ruled against the parents claiming the schools are under no obligation to teach anybody anything and because they were worried that by making too broad a ruling they might encourage a rush of lawsuits that would bankrupt the schools. So learning must be the duty of the student, not the school, despite, as we see, the fact that the schools are designed to prevent real learning for the vast majority of students.

John maintained that the test-examinations-marks business, and it is a multibillion dollar business to many people, is a gigantic racket set up to perpetuate the school bureaucracy, not to serve the students. He often wrote how students, teachers and schools all join together in this masquerade of testing to show how the students know everything they are supposed to know, when in fact they know only a small part of it - if any at all. In his 1983 revision of *HOW CHILDREN FAIL* John added:

> No matter what tests show, very little of what is taught in school is learned, very little of what is learned is remembered and very little of what is remembered is used. The things we learn, remember and use are the things we seek out or meet in the daily, serious, non-school parts of our lives... The true test of intelligence is not how much we know, but how we behave when we don't know what to do.

When John wrote *HOW CHILDREN FAIL* and *HOW CHILDREN LEARN* he still had a vision of what school might become. In these books John writes about rehabilitating old school buildings and turning them into resource and activity centers, citizens' clubs, libraries, music rooms, theaters, sports facilities, meeting rooms, open to and used by old and young together.

John still thought that schools could be changed from within and his reputation was well respected by many educators at this time. In 1968 he stopped teaching grade school and became a visiting lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education; he held the same post the next year at U.C. Berkeley. His experiences in the upper echelons of academia spurred him to write *THE UNDERACHIEVING SCHOOL.* With this book John moves his case out of the classroom and studies the school system itself, which he sees, not surprisingly, as self-serving and demeaning to students. His unabashed sympathy for the plight of college students during campus unrest of the late sixties placed John squarely against the education establishment. I recently came across an unpublished ms. by John from this time, 1969, entitled *LIVING FREE AMONG THE SLAVES: A Handbook for the Young.* In it he offers sharp reasons and strategies for nonviolent confrontation with one's elders. In the midst of this era of hippies, happenings and Vietnam John wrote:

> Older people will say that their anger and hatred has been roused by your appearance and behavior. They may well believe this. It is not true. At best, it is only a small part of the truth. I think the current hatred of large numbers of older people for the young began growing long before there was any movement of student protest and it has been strong for years. For a good many years I have been observing children with adults and particularly of adults with children around them and I have felt more and more strongly, and for some years now, that very large numbers of people have had a generalized dislike of any and all children of almost any age past three or four.
>
> You have not created the hatred of the old. You have perhaps focussed it and given it a clearly visible target....

A publisher could not be found and the book was forgotten, yet it shows how seriously John takes young people's problems.

The next book to be printed was a year later, 1970. John called it *WHAT DO I DO MONDAY?* because it is essentially a book of practical ideas and suggestions for parents, teachers and anyone who works with children. John writes about specific ways of teaching math, science, history and other subjects with household items or easily found examples so people can approach these subjects in more useful ways.

It was around this time John was invited by Ivan Illich to be a guest at CIDOC in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Illich wrote, among many books, *DE-SCHOOLING SOCIETY*, a book John admired. Illich's concept of making people less dependent on institutions, in effect "deschooling" themselves and becoming more self-reliant - life-long learning without credentials - mixes well with John's concepts.

During 1971 -1974, John wrote the books *FREEDOM AND BEYOND* and *ESCAPE FROM CHILDHOOD*. Inspired by his visits with Illich, these books show John moving from the classroom and school system to an analysis of children's place in society. He challenges our very notions about childhood and how we have created a sentimental prison, a walled garden that prevents our young from attaining the dignity and responsibilities they want and need until they reach the arbitrary magic age of eighteen. Children's rights are integral to John's ideas, and the way they are treated in our society angered him. In *FREEDOM AND BEYOND* John writes:

> What determines what sort of person a child will be is how they are treated, not what they are told. If

> children are brought up with strong sense of dignity, competence and work they will extend this to other people one way or the other.

John officially gave up on reforming schools and challenging their assumptions about children and learning in the opening chapter of *INSTEAD OF EDUCATION* (1976).

> Do not waste your time trying to reform these schools. They can not be reformed. It may be possible for a few of you, in a few places, to make a place called school which will be a humane and useful doing (as distinct from educating) place for the young. If so, by all means do it. In most places, not even this will be possible.

INSTEAD OF EDUCATION, like *WHAT DO I DO MONDAY?* has a lot of practical suggestions for making a part of the world of adults accessible to the young which is as interesting, exciting, meaningful, transparent and emotionally safe as possible. John provides examples and methods for running free schools, learning exchanges, and offers his thoughts on how compulsory schooling is among the most authoritarian and destructive of all the inventions of man.

INSTEAD OF EDUCATION marks a change in John's vision of schools and society. Rather than turning schools into resource centers and teachers into guides, as he envisioned in his first books, John describes a new utopia, the society of learners:

> In that society all people could have work to do which is varied and interesting, which challenges and rewards their skill and intelligence, which they can do well and take pride in doing well, over which they can exercise some control and those whose ends and purposes they can understand and respect...Beyond this, all people would

> feel - as very few people do now - that what they think, want say and do would make a real difference in their lives and the lives of people around them. Their politics, like their work, would be meaningful. Their elected officials would be public servants, not petty kings or officers. They would shape and control the society they lived in, instead of being shaped and controlled by it. In such a society no one would worry about 'education'. People would be too busy doing interesting things that mattered and they would grow more informed, competent and wise in doing them. They would learn about the world from living in it, working in it, and changing it and from knowing a wide variety of people who were doing the same. But nowhere in the world does such a society exist, nor is there one for the making.

Given his pessimistic view, John provides sympathetic advice and sound tactics for change, including a plan for an underground railroad to get your kids away from authorities if you are serious about taking them out of the school system. It is here the bridge John created toward homeschooling starts to define itself.

People had been teaching children at home instead of sending them to school for quite some time before John became a spokesman for them. When John wrote *INSTEAD OF EDUCATION* he wasn't aware of such people but they found each other after publication of this book. A year later, on the basis of correspondence he started with some people who successfully taught their children at home, John printed the first issue of *GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING* and started selling books he thought were important and helpful to learners of all ages.

GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING is a bi-monthly newsletter, started in 1977, that is best described by John. In the first issue of *GWS* he writes that *GWS* will provide readers with approaches to learning...

> ...in which people, young and old, can learn and do things, acquire skills and find interesting and useful work, without having to go through the process of schooling. It is mainly about people who want to take or keep their children out of school and about what they might do instead, what problems come up and how they cope with these... *GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING* is very interested, as schools and schools of education do not seem to be, in the act and art of teaching, that is, *all* the ways in which people of all ages, in or out of school, can more effectively share information, ideas and skills.

Disappointed and disillusioned by previous efforts to reform the schools, John writes in *GWS #1* about how homeschooling might cause social change:

> In starting this newsletter, we are putting into practice a nickel and dime theory about social change, which is, that important and lasting social change always comes slowly and only when people change their lives, not just their political beliefs or parties... I have come to understand, finally, and even to accept, that in almost everything I believe and care about I am a member of a minority in my own country, in most cases a very small minority... This doesn't trouble me any more, as long as those minorities of which I am a member go on growing. My work is to help them grow. If we can describe the effective majority of our society as moving in direction X and ourselves, the small minority, as moving in direction Y, what I want to do is to find ways to help people who want to move in direction Y, to move in that direction, rather than run after the great X-bound army shouting at them, "Hey you guys, stop, turn around, you ought to be heading in direction Y!" In areas they feel are important, people don't change their ideas, much less their lives, because someone comes along with a bunch of arguments to show that they are mistaken, even wicked, to think or do as they do. Once in a while, we may have to argue with the X-bound majority to try to stop them from doing a great and immediate wrong. But most of the time, as a way of making real and deep changes in society, this kind of

shouting and arguing seems to me to be a waste of time.

Tired of school but always fascinated by children and their ways of learning. John wrote an unusual book in his canon at this time, *NEVER TOO LATE*, his musical autobiography. John always loved music, jazz and classical especially, and he himself could play some flute and guitar which he learned as a young man. A few years before he wrote this book, when he was in his early fifties, John learned to play the cello on his own. Besides tracing his life and musical history, the book serves as a reminder for us to try something from the ground up again. As an adult learner John shows that to learn well we must become like a very young child again, dealing with endless false starts and seemingly inpenetrable mysteries. It is a warm autobiography of a true individual and learner.

NEVER TOO LATE was published in 1978, a year after John started *GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING*. John would have preferred to spend his later life with his cello, but he soon found he was much in demand as an advocate for homeschooling. Families who were homeschooling for years contacted *GWS* and expressed relief that someone other than themselves practiced homeschooling.

Then, and even now, a family can get pulled into court on truancy charges because they are teaching their children at home but haven't permission from the State or School Board to do so. John frequently wrote and spoke on behalf of such families. This used to happen a lot more frequently than it does now because most school districts, like most people, never knew that people can or would want to keep their kids home rather than send them to school, or that it was a perfectly legal option. John's helpful and wise testimony before several state legislators and various commissions helped smooth the way for homeschooling in some states, and he found subscriptions and letters coming in bigger mail-bags every day.

John's last book, *TEACH YOUR OWN*, was a direct result of his involvement with *GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING*. Many educators felt John abandoned them when he wrote this book, but I don't think they read it closely. Its subtitle is: *A HOPEFUL PATH FOR EDUCATION*. *TEACH YOUR OWN*'s pages are loaded with letters from parents describing how they manage to let their children learn around them without anyone going crazy. It is full of positive news about children as well as containing the best nuts and bolts descriptions about how to answer questions about homeschooling, how to write a curriculum, how to make your proposal, how to find out what your legal rights are, and just about anything else you need to know about unschooling children. Most importantly for John, homeschooling provides the proof that children can be trusted to learn without being forced to.

Why do people homeschool? John thought there are three reasons:

> They think raising their children is their business, not the government's; they enjoy being with their children and watching and helping them learn and don't want to give that up to others; they want to keep them from being hurt, mentally, physically and spiritually.

John emphasized how homeschoolers can allow their children's abilities to develop naturally in an unforced manner. Certainly parents who take their children out of school would be wise to make sure they do all the work they say they would do on their curriculum, but once they get that out of the way, and some families can do a whole semester's required work in about six weeks, then they start their real learning. Everyday homeschoolers prove by their example that learning is a life-long process that can take place anywhere and anytime, not just in a school supervised by experts. Time and a great student to teacher ratio are on the homeschoolers' side, rather than pitting their child's learning against a schedule designed by someone who has never seen their child. They are best able to facilitate a child's learning, especially during their early school years.

Experience being the greatest of all teachers, homeschoolers can make their children part of their everyday adult lives. By being accepted into the continuum of their parents' lives, a child learns by doing, by seeing other people work and do things and wanting to do them themselves. By seeing how one uses numbers to decide what to purchase, seeing their parents read and write to communicate with others, these children are being exposed to the total territory the world of numbers and words encompasses. Math, science and English are no longer facts one memorizes and uses just for tests, disconnected from real life. Homeschooled children can learn math, science and other skills not in little increments of lesson plans, but by actually doing them, by counting, by reading, by taking in the manner they see other people behaving around them.

A child in a homeschool environment is afforded the opportunity to learn as he or she always did, that is, through play and interaction with the people and objects around them. The importance of play during childhood is noted by Piaget and many other child specialists, but most schools rob their students of that. From age six on, forty hours a week or more, the student must be forced to sit still and be instructed at the cost of his or her childhood. During classtime which fills the bulk of any school day, daydreaming and childish behavior, such as playing, are ridiculed and penalized; we chastise the child for being a child. Why are we in such a rush to get them out of childhood? John wrote in *HOW CHILDREN FAIL*: 'Our teaching is too full of words and they come too soon.'

Homeschoolers do not take their children out of school to escape from the real world or to make them antisocial. They make their children part of their world, the real world of business, home and family. Where being a citizen means getting out into the community, meeting and being exposed to people from all walks of life and all ages. Boy and girl scouts, 4H, YM- and YWCA's, church and community sponsored events, private lessons, apprenticeships, after-school sports activities - all these and more are ways that children who stay at home are 'socialized.'

The so-called social life of schools is probably a major reason why parents want to take their children out of school in the first place in *TEACH YOUR OWN*, John wrote:

> Social life in the classroom is mean-spirited, status-oriented, competitive and snobbish. No one ever says school is kindly, generous, supporting, democratic, friendly, loving or good for children. When I condemn the social life of schools people say, "But that's what the children are going to meet in Real Life." This seems to me to be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In his last years, homeschooling provided John with the hope that children may escape the indignities, mind-numbing routines and hypocrisy of school and so become the loving, intelligent people he believed we are all capable of being. Two years before he died, John revised his first two books, *HOW CHILDREN FAIL* and *HOW CHILDREN LEARN*. His later additions make the books even more forceful in their arguments, and when looked at as the beginning of John's writing and thinking about schools, they clearly show how John's criticisms and ideas about schools and learning developed in a logically and consistent manner based on his constant observations of people, especially young children, learning. As he says in the revised *HOW CHILDREN FAIL*:

> Nobody starts off stupid. You have to watch babies and infants and think seriously about what all of them learn and do, to see that, except for the grossly retarded, they show a style of life and a desire and ability to learn, that in an older person we might call genius... We adults destroy most of the intellectual and creative capacity of children by the things we do to them or make them do. We destroy this capacity by making them afraid, afraid of not doing what other people want, of not pleasing, of making mistakes, of failing, of being wrong.
>
> We destroy the disinterested (I do not mean uninterested) love of learning in small children, which is

> so strong when they are small, by encouraging and compelling them to work for petty and contemptible rewards - gold stars or papers marked 100 and tacked to the wall, or A's on report cards or honor rolls or Dean's lists or Phi Beta Kappa keys - in short, for the ignoble satisfaction of feeling that they are better than someone else. We encourage them to feel that the end and aim of all we do in school is nothing more than to get a good mark on a test, or to impress someone with what they seem to know. We kill, not only their curiosity but their feeling that it is a good and admirable thing to be curious, so that at the age of ten most of them will not ask questions and will show a good deal of scorn for those who do.

At one point John wanted to make a bumper sticker with this slogan on it: "Children are born smart. Schools make them dumb." but he thought better of it. It summarizes his thoughts quite neatly, though.

John's work is based on principles of nonviolence and faith in our intellectual abilities to grow. He showed this in his daily life as well in his books. As his ideas about school changed, so did he. He was frustrated by the lack of change in our schools, to be sure, but he kept finding new ways to approach the problem. John's grand vision of a peaceful society of life-long learners and doers was at least partially realized for him during his life through the efforts of homeschooling families, and their happy children are his tribute.

Pat Farenga, who might be considered John Holt's spiritual son, is director of Holt Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Along with a small but dedicated, hard-working group of followers of Holt's vision, he publishes a monthly newsletter, catalog and parent contact, advice and exchange periodical entitled Growing Without Schooling, which has become a sort of bible for homeschooling families.

ROBOTS BUILDING ROBOTS?

by Mary M. Leue

In the fall of 1985, seven teachers and parents from the Free School community in Albany drove to Chicago to attend the annual meeting of the Association for Humanistic Psychology. One of the sessions, having to do with women in leadership roles, was addressed by the curator of the Jane Addams museum (formerly Hull House) in Chicago. The curator described the work of this remarkable pioneering woman, Jane Addams, and showed us slides of her life's work. Hull House, purchased by Miss Addams in 1899, was the first phase of that work. This was an old mansion once owned by the Hull family, but now surrounded by the slums of Chicago's west side. In it Miss Addams established a community center which came to be known as a settlement house and formed the center of an extraordinary community of European immigrant factory worker families. The entire project, organized and maintained by Miss Addams, became a model for similar social centers in many American cities and provided much of the impetus for the establishment of the present career of social work, but on a totally different basis in her talented hands, offering these foreign-speaking families literacy in English, job training, music, art and the theater, as well as emotional support and a hope for social justice through the promotion of reform legislation. It was largely through the efforts of Miss Addams (and others with whom she joined) that reforms were enacted to address issues such as child labor, public health, the vote for women, unemployment, and old-age insurance.

The museum curator described in detail the development of the community centered around Hull House, and showed us slides of classrooms, machine shops, rooms with industrial sewing machines in them, painting and music classes, and theater productions in several different languages. I learned one very interesting fact (among others) which I believe relates directly to the problems faced today by members of the educational establishment in their efforts to create a system which actually does the job it is intended for, not just for the few, but for all citizens of our democratic society. My point relates primarily to education, but could be applied equally to social work, I believe.

In order to make this point understandable, I have to say more about the Hull House community as I understand its evolution. Addams' initial focus was on acculturation for the immigrant families whose primitive, often degraded, living conditions had provided the stimulus for her effort. The daughter of an Illinois banker who also owned several mills, she had visited the homes of workers in her father's mills as a child and been impressed by their "horrid, dirty houses." She had vowed to buy and live in a big house among those little ones when she grew up so that poor people could come and talk with her.

Addams was also fortunate in being encouraged in this effort by her father, who was politically liberal and believed in women's education (even if his prosperity didn't also enrich his workers, I must add!), and who left her his money when he died.

It was, as much as for any other reason, these factors in Addams' own position and character - a secure and affectionate childhood, a passionately sympathetic nature, a personal sense of naive power uninfluenced by informed prior understanding of the complexities and ambiguities of the class system, and both money and influence among similarly situated women - which account for her success in this monumental venture. Neither she nor the many, many philanthropically inclined men and women who donated the millions with which Jane Addams financed her huge project, were seriously encumbered by statistics concerning the embeddedness of the poor in insulated social cocoons which prevented them from learning!

These circumstances, and one other, the crucial catalyst for the entire project, I believe, account for the success of the entire enterprise in uplifting and enriching the lives of thousands of immigrants who came through her doors, people who are many of our most impressive cultural and professional leaders of today's society! That other ingredient - a personal manner of operating of Addams herself, I believe - was her belief in the presence within all people of the same quality she herself possessed - namely, a healthy regard for personal autonomy and inner-direction (to use David Reisman's terms). It was this belief and the resulting quality of her very personal approach to people which created a pattern of democratic leadership in terms of which the whole project functioned. The reason this community no longer exists does not reflect any failing on the part of its design and execution, but rather, has to do with a demographic shift in the area, plus the introduction of social legislation by the government which took the management of 'welfare' out of private hands and created a consequent erosion of the role of the personal in matters of social support for the poor.

I don't think Americans as a whole have yet grasped the entirety of the power of Jane Addams' leadership pattern, which combined a belief in human excellence with a gift for implementing democratic participation by those affected by policy-making. Perhaps at long last we are working on it! I hope so. It is interesting to me that this kind of democratic corporate structure is currently being tried successfully in business - Apple Computer and People Express Airlines spring to mind as prime examples - long before the 'education establishment' seems to have grasped the concept as a working proposition to be implemented as a model for schools.

Actually, education has always been an ambivalent sort of enterprise, it seems to me. Horace Mann, who was responsible for much of the form of our elementary system, as well as the establishment for teacher training institutions (then called normal schools), stood firmly for the concept of education for democracy, but there were many wealthy citizens of this country whose aims were far less idealistic. What they wanted were docile workers for their factories, and had discovered that workers who had been schooled were far less rebellious than their ignorant but self-assertive mates. Paradoxically, it is the very fact of democracy itself (in the sense of majority rule) which has largely defeated that purpose, I believe! We duly elect representative officials who govern us according to the values we ourselves reflect, but the values we reflect are all too often a product of both ignorance and prejudice - i.e., of lack of effective education in the broad sense.

What happened to subvert the original ideals and principles of the educationally enlightened framers of our democracy? Initially, perhaps, the subversion began with the anti-educational bias of the practitioners of "Jacksonian democracy" who had been excluded from the eastern halls of academe and of power. But it was the effect of the industrial revolution which drew so many millions of European immigrants to our shores, most of them victims of European industrialism, which, I believe, brought with it (and them) all the problems Europe had been unable to resolve. Our American response was no different. The process of "blaming the victim," pointing to home conditions and personal pathology as the explanation for the relative ineducability of the children of the poor, compounded the facts of economic oppression and official indifference. In large cities where the problem was acute, voters all too often elected school boards members who appointed school principals who agreed with their viewpoint that it was the poor people themselves who were to blame for the relative inability of their children to learn. These principals in turn hired teachers willing to struggle with "the problem" of attempting to "teach the unteachable." Most of these teachers were women. Increasingly, the evidence rolls in pointing to the relative failure of our public educational system. Even good teachers have been unable to do an effective job with a growing number of children in spite the development of ever more sophisticated teaching methods, even more frequent monitoring of results and the widespread use of educational technology of all kinds, the latest being the use of computers.

The relative boorishness, of ignorant cultural vulgarity and functional illiteracy of a very large number of Americans as a people (apparently the group on whose say-so television programs are selected, for example!) is nothing short of shocking in the face of so much expertise available to our teachers and the expenditure of so much money to fund improvements within the system! We pay heavily for this fundamental lack of direction within our democratic society, the same lack addressed by James Bryant Conant, former president of Harvard University, in his study entitled *Slums and Suburbs*, published during the sixties. This study reported on the shocking contrast between the schools of the rich and poor. Conant points to this contrast as the primary source of our social problems, citing our schools as a system "which starves the bodies and minds of the needy, while it provides increasing privileges for the affluent," to quote from the book cover. It is important to note *both* effects, not just the effect on the poor, I believe. The climate of opinion among the leaders of our culture is profoundly affected, as Conant points out, by the lack of effective teaching of social values. Thus, it is the narrowness of vision of our professional men and women who direct the development of our social institutions, not just the problems of our children, which is involved in the failure of our educational system.

But in the early days of elementary schools, it was not always this way - and there are still a few of the 'old school' of career teachers around - most of them women - who seem to be able to do real teaching with children from all walks of life regardless of their presenting problems. How can this phenomenon be accounted for? There is a saying, "Teachers are born, not made." How true is this? These 'special' teachers are now so rare that we honor them with titles like 'teacher of the year' or give them special status as 'master teachers.' How can this phenomenon be accounted for? Have teachers as a class become robots who build other robots? If so, why are these few so different?

I remember a few years ago hearing Jacques Barzun, of Columbia Teachers' College in New York City, speaking on the radio about the career of teaching. His point has stuck with me. Barzun was speaking about the way in which the teaching profession has changed in terms of the motivation people have for adopting it. In the beginning, he said, the people who became teachers were very often women who had grown up inspired and motivated by their well-to-do, culturally enlightened fathers to become teachers in order to play a role in the reforming of society in regard to the poor. For them teaching was a career in much the same way that entering the convent offered women of the poor a personally satisfying career which provided an alternative to marriage. Edith Wharton, writing about the lives of the wealthy at the turn of the century, gives us a vivid glimpse how "society women" were expected to live. Wharton offers a clear image of what women like Jane Addams and many teachers of that time might have seen as the shape of their lives with and without the alternative of a career of satisfying service of some kind.

Since that time, however, Barzun continued, reasons for becoming teachers have drastically changed. For women, and of late, increasingly, also for men, teaching has become one of the principal avenues for social mobility available in our society. Teacher training institutions are presently a part of virtually every university in the country, and the resulting glut of teachers is only now beginning to stem the flood of applicants! Teachers in today's world, like their counterparts in civil service and business, tend to want to make a good showing with their superiors by "running a tight ship," following their carefully thought-out lesson plans each day as they were taught in school to do, holding their charges with a tight disciplinary rein, conscientiously grading their little papers, sometimes until late at night, filling out their snowstorm of paper forms required by regulation, custom, and law, administering the requisite tests and duly reporting the dismal results, and suffering all too often from "burnout" or frequent illnesses.

About ten years ago, an English teacher from a nearby suburban high school with a reputation for excellence asked me if we could exchange roles for a day in order that she might discover for herself what our school was like. I agreed enthusiastically, and so, ended up teaching for a day in her school.

It was a fascinating (and discouraging) experience. Two things in particular struck me about this school. One was the cultural naiveté and indifference of the students, and the other was the professional naiveté and indifference of the teachers! It felt like a classic case of the "blind leading the blind!" The conversation in the "teachers' lounge," where we ate our sandwiches together, was about hairdressers, baseball teams, and movies, as I remember - certainly not about education! I was appalled at the low cultural level implied among these putative cultural leaders of our young!

I realize that such opinions are not popular in the teaching profession! In fact, they might well be considered uppity, lacking in democratic tolerance for cultural differences! Am I just a snob? No, I don't think so! Conant spelled out very clearly the horrendous consequences of ignoring our cultural inequalities. He pinpointed the inexorably decreasing cultural level of our society implicit in lowering our standards for graduation from high school. The entire issue is fraught with all sorts of paradoxes including the one which sees such lower standards as evidence of the growing democratization of our schools! Conant believed that unless our social and political leaders are themselves culturally enlightened on a very broad base, not simply trained in a professional specialty, we end up with benighted leaders - most crucially, of course, the kind of political leaders who, as Gunnar Myrdahl (among others) has pointed out, tend to follow a kind of unspoken belief that failure of a policy mandates its implementation with ever-greater vigor and involvement rather than its abandonment in favor of one that will work!

It is this tendency to a narrow definition of what is required to solve problems which has led, I believe, to the failure of most of our current social institutions to carry out the tasks they were created to perform. This manner of problem-solving comes from a very narrow, focused perspective on the definition of 'a problem' whatever the field, whatever the nature of the task to be performed or the problem to be solved. Americans are noted for their 'know-how' in problem-solving. They are not so well off when it comes to *defining* the problems to which they bring this pragmatic capacity! It is not that we have lacked opinion leaders at the top who understood how important it is to have a broader base for one's perspective on reality. A James Bryant Conant, a John Dewey, a Jane Addams, an Alfred North Whitehead (*The Aims of Education*) are all in print, and their words are mandatory reading for all teacher trainees! According to my curator informant in Chicago, John Dewey was a frequent visitor to the Hull House community and an enthusiastic observer in particular of their educational methods.

It was here, according to her, that he developed his ideas about education as "learning to do by doing." These ideas became embodied in the 'progressive education' movement, which introduced project-centered teaching to the schools. But the context of Dewey's concepts seldom seemed to 'trickle down' to the actual experiential level of the [illegible]cipal in his office or the teacher in the classroom. All too often, "projects" become just one more task laid on bored, angry children on the actual classroom level - or sometimes a jolly social substitute for competence in skill subjects like reading, writing and ciphering. Progressive education in the end was abandoned as a central teaching method, because it didn't work very well in the only place that counted!

The failure of professional teachers to translate ideas into practical results in the classroom comes about, I believe, from the basic organizational structure within each school, as well as from some degree of personal, cultural or cognitive deficiency in their own development. Teachers, after all, almost always work to make up such deficiencies all along throughout their career, by going back to school or taking "workshops." The basic structural flaw stems largely from cultural narrowness in defining educational goals, I believe. This lack of breadth of vision stretches all the way from the outlook of members of the school board at the "top" right down through to the teacher in the classroom, but the crucial lack is at the top, at the overall policy-making level.

It is rare that a natural democratic leader who personally believes in the universality of the native drive for excellence inherent in the human spirit, and who also understands both the problems and possible practical ways in which to resolve them manages to be elected to membership on a school board. And when on occasion a culturally enlightened person does manage it, s/he is usually so much in the minority that s/he can't make effective policy changes. Further, even if s/he should be so fortunate as to have a like-minded majority of members to work with, all too often his/her outlook and experience fail to provide a broad enough base from which to view policy in terms which have a chance to work effectively!

As I said above, a lot of the ferment concerning positive organizational change which both engenders success and creates a satisfying work environment is taking place in business, where the making of profit governs the definition of success rather than some more nebulous cultural concept involving values and social norms. We heard in Chicago about enthusiastic and successful participation by members of the Association for Humanistic Psychology in helping corporations to upgrade the quality of work environments by better understanding of humanistic principles for improving relationships in the workplace and the relationship of such improvement to the efficiency of business success. We have yet to carry over any such implications to our schools, where democracy is supposed to be learned but which actually are among the most undemocratic of our social institutions! We teach "civics," or "problems of democracy," but we do not practice the thing itself! A lack of disseminated policy-making power runs all the way throughout our educational establishment, including our teacher training institutions!

No one is ever asked to engage in the practice of determining policy as a part of learning to administer it! Principals in training (let alone teachers and pupils!) meekly take a whole series of courses in how to administer, without ever having an opportunity to do so as part of their training! Graduate students going for the PhD in education never get to choose their own curriculum or participate in the shaping of their courses, yet they are the ones who teach teachers, never having had the experience of learning how to teach effectively! Universities seem to have become places where words in books get transplanted from one head to another without ever crossing the experiential barrier to the task involved!

This issue of what might be called 'automism' brings me back to my robot image. There was a cartoon in the New Yorker years ago which has stuck with me. It depicts a huge factory building the floor of which is covered with complicated machines. The workers are all robots. When you look at what they are building, you see they are building robots! Two men stand observing the scene. One says to the other, 'One wonders where it all will end!' We are rather like that, I believe!

As I said above, this deplorable situation is beginning to change. I saw an article recently in the Washington University alumni magazine about the increasing use of apprenticeship placements for students within various occupational fields, so that a part of their college experience would be actual work time, not just study. Antioch and Goddard Colleges have been employing this method for years, with great success. For four years, at The Free School in Albany, we had a series of one or two work-study Antioch students per quarter, living and working with us, as well as several local university undergraduates putting in several 'community service' hours for credit, teaching with us. On the other hand, we have only had one student teacher who was able to receive credit in a teacher training program by teaching with us.

The assignment of student teachers to various local schools is treated like the doling out of political plums by departments of education, according to a professor in a nearby teacher training program. He expressed his regret to us that he could not send us student teachers, since we are the only school I know of locally which practices democratic policy-making on an on-going basis, among students as well as teachers, parents and administrators. Our rule of thumb is that only those who are actually present at the school are really in a position to make intelligent decisions for its governance. The corollary of this rule is that anyone is welcome to become a member of that establishment and, to this extent, become a member of the policy-making body. With us, the roles of principal, teacher, staff, parent and student frequently overlap.

This way of conducting a school creates, not chaos, as one might fear, but more enlightened self-interest on the part of everyone, since the school belongs equally to us all. It is not, on the other hand, to be confused with the 'parent cooperative' model, which mandates parent management without actual daily participation. We tried that, early on, with disastrous results! No one could agree with anyone else, and all was utter bedlam at our policy meetings! No, the way we do things is what Wilhelm Reich called 'work democracy,' meaning an organizational structure which grows directly out of the nature of the work situation and the work to be accomplished, rather than being imposed upon it from the outside. As far as I am concerned, it is the only form of organizational structure which works, in the sense of enabling us to do our job, and to do it effectively. We have had fifteen years, now, to improve our ways and our "product," and the results, in successful alumnae/i, are impressive, and increasingly so. DEMOCRACY WORKS!

I regret the fact that changes toward more participatory forms of institutional governance seem so remote, so unlikely, in the public educational system, while private or "alternative" schools seem, with a few notable exceptions, to pay so much more attention to financing than to this truly delicate art. I for one would hesitate to claim more personal democratic authenticity in alternative schools taken as a whole than in public ones. The chief difference is organizational, giving alternatives the edge, but not universally. Lack of democracy in alternative schools is perhaps harder to spot: there, adults sometimes substitute for appropriate democratic participation a kind of ideological standard which proclaims the importance of "the child" and the participation of "the child" in policy-making but too often this doctrine actually masks a subtle form of manipulation by adults - or even, occasionally, actual abdication of appropriate policy-making power on the part of those adults. I have sometimes thought that hidden or unacknowledged power might be even more destructive than the naked variety. Fortunately, not all alternatives are of this kind.

The point I have been stressing is that democratic leadership at the top is essential if real democracy is to be practiced - and genuinely democratic leaders are the product of genuinely democratic experience. This is a commodity not to be found everywhere, but one which we greatly need, for our schools, as for our country. It is time we began learning how to bring this quality and this experience into our public schools.

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CHILDREN'S THEATRE AS EDUCATION
by Chris Mercogliano

While teaching math again at The Free School this past year (my thirteenth), I stumbled across a wonderful discovery - the learning value, and beyond that the healing value of doing live theatre with kids.

There I was reverently doing my thing with a group of eight seven, eight, and nine year olds, some of whom were just coming from unhappy public school experiences and weren't the least bit interested in learning arithmetic, or in learning to read, or in anything that carried the scent of THE CLASSROOM. It wasn't working. This was a particularly diverse group of kids that just didn't get along at all, and they were resisting all my efforts to help them get into the flow of lhe school.

Since none of us was having a good time, I decided, "To hell with math!" It was time for me to start doing what I enjoyed doing more than anything else, reading aloud. I chose a juicy children's classic - George MacDonald's *~The Princess and Curdie*, a turn-of-thecentury English romance full of intrigue and magical beings and with both a girl and boy protagonist about the group's age. Listening was optional, and about half of them wandered in and out over the course of the first few chapters. I grew a bit doubtful about my choice, which was written in a language and a style quite foreign to the kids. My fears were laid to rest when I realized that the most tuned in was Frank, the boy that I had been having the most difficulty with.

Somewhat dyslexic and still struggling with reading on the first grade level at age nine, Frank was hanging on every word! His ability to understand the difficult syntax and to follow the long descriptive passages just amazed me - and his enthusiasm was quite contagious. Before long all eight were glued to their seats insisting that I read to them for the entire morning.

As the story drew to a dramatic and happy ending, I was deluged with a chorus of pleas to let them act it out. Having had no previous experience of any kind with theatre, I responded right from my gut (or lack thereof). "No!" I said, "The story is much too complex. How would you ever... And besides, this was a novel I read to you and not a play..."

Fortunately, the kids paid no attention whatsoever, and the next thing I knew, they had selected themselves for all of the major and minor roles in the play. Next I was appointed the director and told to hurry up and write down all of the characters and who had said they would play them. After I had managed to close my still-open mouth and catch my breath, I began to realize what was happening. Here was a bunch of cantankerous kids who couldn't cross the street together without battling with each other, and they had just cast their new play - with some of them choosing three and four different roles by themselves without a single argument. Then, looking at the cast, I noticed that each of them had instinctively chosen the right roles for themselves. For instance, Frank, who was not well-liked because of his constant teasing and bugging to get attention, was the unanimous choice to play the leading role of Curdie. Alicia, always on the fringe and wanting to either be alone or play with much younger children, was to play the other lead, the dual role of the ancient queen and the beautiful young princess who saves the day with her magical powers. Clearly, I was witnessing a miracle and had better get on board.

My worries began in earnest when it was apparent that the kids intended to leave nothing out. An all-out adaptation of the novel was called for; so, under the kids' direction, I started writing. My worries increased as they poured themselves into making costumes and backdrops and talked about inviting parents and grandparents too. As I wrote, I realized that the two leading actors could barely read and seldom remembered anything that I asked them to.

We needed a miracle, I thought, and I watched one gradually unfold each day. The kids were like a well-oiled machine from the beginning. They scrounged materials for costumes and scenery and lined up teachers to help with the production of the play, again with little or no squabbling. I was reminded of Sylvia Ashton Warner's concept of the "creative vent". She said that truly alive children are filled with energy constantly seeking release either through "creative vents, or through "destructive vents," and she discovered that the more her Maori students expressed themselves creatively the less they fought with each other. I was awestricken by the transformation taking place in my group. Occasional arguments occurred around how the play should proceed, and tensions definitely rose as the evening of the performance drew closer, but someone would always come up with a quick solution to the problem and hurt feelings were rare. It seemed to me that the drama in *The Princess and Curdie* was so compelling, and the kids' identification with their characters so complete, that they no longer had much impulse to stir up 'drama' with each other.

There were individual transformations that were equally amazing. Frank, who had been working on memorizing the spelling of his last name when work on the play began, and to whom the idea of 'homework' was anathema, studied his lines every night. He was having terrible trouble with one monologue near the climax of the play, so I suggested that we rewrite it in his own words and that he learn it that way. He came in the next morning with it perfectly memorized - in the original form! Alicia was doing equally well learning the dialogue for her very large part, and was showing herself to be quite a talented actress. Usually arriving at school looking like an unmade bed, she began coming in with her long hair beautifully brushed. Mark, painfully shy and quiet as a churchmouse, really started hamming up his role as the evil Lord Chamberlain, shouting out his lines to the back row. Betsy, the archetypical good little girl, and typecast by the others as the little princess in the play, began asserting herself. She refused to just sit back and observe the final battle as George MacDonald had written in the original story, and insisted instead on slashing away with her dagger right alonside the boys. She also didn't want to be married to Curdie in the end, so we changed that too.

Each of the kids seemed to be going through an inner process that was exactly right for them. There is a branch of psychotherapy called Psychosynthesis that works with the various 'subpersonalities' that each of us is comprised of; the idea being that by experiencing them and acting them out with awareness, the individual becomes more of an integrated 'team' and more able to get what she/he wants in life. I saw each actor in our play experimenting with one or more of their 'subpersonalities'. Philip, a very talented, creative boy who is prone to violent outbursts, chose to play both the King and the devious butler who is part of the plot to poison him. In the end, the King manages to harness his rage at being betrayed and drive the evil forces out of his kingdom. James, who ordinarily keeps his anger and aggression under wraps, got into his role as the treacherous royal physician so much that the entire audience hissed when he came out for the scene where he tries to stab the king. He also cleverly improvised the role of one of the magical monster-creatures that helps Curdie. James considers himself 'weird' at times, and creating this role seemed to me to be his way of getting at his wounded self-image. Then there is Danny who has a hot-tempered father and is furious about living in the shadow of an idolized older brother choosing the role of Peter, Curdie's father. Peter, a kind and reasonable soul, arrives in the nick of time to heroically save his son from imminent death. Danny made such an entrance that it practically carried him into the audience during the performance, where his brother sat proudly watching. Tom, a physically powerful and athletic boy who often shies away from non-physical challenge, played Lina, Curdle's wolf-like guardian that becomes a central hero figure during the play. Though it was a non-speaking role, Tom received one of the loudest ovations at the end. Lastly of course, there was the teacher, whose Achilles' heel is to want to be in complete control in the classroom, and who suffers from both writing and performing inhibitions. I chose the role of narrator, which allowed me to be a facilitator BEHIND the action, helping to keep the flow going, but not in control.

It was a magnificent performance, played to a standing-room-only audience in a makeshift theatre in the upstairs of our school. Ovation after ovation brought the kids well-deserved acknowledgment for their three months of hard work. Reflecting back on it now, I think it was an invaluable process for everyone, containing so many kinds and levels of learning and healing. Mark Twain called children's theatre "one of the great inventions of the twentieth century, offering the greatest potential of all the arts for learning," and I certainly agree with him. I think the play became a model for learning for each of the kids, and for me as well. A couple of weeks after the performance, Frank wrote a very moving poem that he wanted to read at a local annual poetry reading called, "The Readings Against the End of the World." The day before the reading he told me he had changed his mind because he was afraid he wouldn't be able to read what he had written. I asked him to think back to how he had managed to learn that difficult speech for the play, and reminded him of his success. He went ahead with the reading and did a great job. It seems to me that most importantly we all learned that anything is possible, given the motivation to do it. This was the kids' process, and the motivation was entirely their own. Also, there were no experts; everyone just figured out what it was that they needed to do. In the end, a group of inexperienced kids and their math teacher put on a play together, and had a good time at it.

Interestingly, organized children's theatre in the United States began in the settlement houses in New York City and Chicago at the turn of the century. Social activists like Jane Addams realized that live theatre offered an ideal way to bring diverse groups of uprooted immigrant children together and to teach them communication and social skills as well as literature and language. Now, here we were in the inner city of Albany, New York, in a school which has certainly functioned as a settlement house at one time or another, beginning a little children's theatre, with what I trust was the first of many memorable performances.

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REFUTING HOWARD GARDNER'S THEORY OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

by David L. Lehman, PhD.

In the introductory chapter to his recent book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (Basic Books, Inc., New York, 1983), Howard Gardner, Harvard psychologist, lists briefly the purposes of his work, concluding with the following statement:

> Finally - this is the most important, but also the most difficult, challenge - I hope that the point of view that I articulate here may prove of genuine utility to those policy makers and practitioners charged with the 'development of other individuals' ...Too often practitioners involved in efforts of this sort have embraced flawed theories of intelligence or cognition and have, in the process, supported programs that have accomplished little or even proved counterproductive...If the framework put forth here is adopted, it may at least discourage those interventions that seem doomed to failure and encourage those that have a chance for success.[1]

Being a middle school/high school principal and thus qualifying as one of Gardner's 'practitioners,' it is my central purpose herein to urge my colleagues *not* to embrace this flawed theory of intelligence, as it is clearly one of those interventions doomed to failure about which Gardner warns us, and is devoid of genuine utility.

The importance of refuting Howard Gardner's 'theory of multiple intelligences' is underscored both by the dangerously blithe acceptance and perpetuation of the theory in the popular press,[2] and the apparently general acceptance of the theory by the professional community as evidenced by the numerous quotes from psychologists on the dust jacket of *Frames of Mind*, and such statements as - "Armed with Gardner's book, educators can try to change the fabric of society..."[3] I suggest that Princeton psychologist George Miller in his rather gentle critique is more to the point when he states:

> It is *less a scientific theory* than a line on which he (Gardner) hangs out his intellectual laundry... It is probable, therefore, that Mr. Gardner's catalogue of intelligences is *wrong*.[4] (emphases mine)

Those of us who work directly, daily, year after year with young people in our schools would do well to be reminded of the all too recent "flawed theory" of "brain growth periodization" of Epstein and Toepfer.[5] Those of us who are principals or central administrators typically are not well schooled in biology, particularly neuro-biology (fortunately, I was a former high school biology teacher and perhaps have a better shot at understanding such matters than many of my colleagues). We are thus all too easily led, or *mis*-led, by professionals in these areas, and humbly seek to apply the findings of such researchers to our teachers and their interactions with students, taking seriously such statements as - "...traditional middle school practices which challenge a youngster to continue to grow on a continuum across the age 10-14 years time have *proven* nrealistic and unattainable."[6]

We can be intimidated by such statements as - "...the implications of these findings are inescapable as we seek to be more responsive to the learning needs and capacities of emerging adolescents found in the middle grades"; and, "The practices and problems of middle grades programs which forged ahead in ignorance of the facts of brain growth periodization in years past prove one sad reality; 'It's not nice to fool mother nature.'[7] For who among us is trying to fool mother nature, or be unresponsive to the learning needs of our students, or wants to be considered ignorant? Fortunately Richard McQueen has recently provided an excellent critique of brain growth periodization theory, and educators would do well to heed his cautions about applying these claims to our work with young people.[8]

My refuting of Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences is based on the following four areas - 1) a commonsense, layman's view of the theory, 2) an assessment of the "scientific-ness" of the theory, 3) an analysis of the educational implications of the theory. But first, perhaps a brief summary of the theory of multiple intelligences would be useful. Thus, I'll begin with Howard Gardner's own words.

> ...I argue that there is pervasive evidence for the existence of several *relatively autonomous* human intellectual competences, abbreviated hereafter as "human intelligences". These are the "frames of mind" of my title.[9]

Gardner defines six (6) such human intelligences and divides "personal" intelligence into two (2) intelligences - interpersonal and intrapersonal - for a total of seven (7). Each of these, he claims, meet the following eight (8) criteria or "signs":

1) potential isolation by brain damage;
2) the existence of idiots, savants, prodigies, and other exceptional individuals;

3) an identifiable core operation or a set of operations;
4) a distinctive developmental history, along with a definable set of expert "end-state" performances;
5) an evolutionary history and evolutionary plausibility;
6) support from experimental findings; and
7) support from psychometric findings;
8) susceptibility to encoding in a symbol system.[10]

The seven multiple intelligences of Gardner, with a brief description, are as follows:

- **linguistic intelligence** - the ability to use language to convince others, to help one remember information, to explain things, and to reflect upon language itself;[11]
- **musical intelligence** - the ability to discern and reproduce in some form the elements of music - pitch, rhythm and timbre - as well as the affect of such sounds;[12]
- **logical-mathematical intelligence** - the ability to appreciate and perform various actions, to develop statements or propositions about those actual or potential actions, and to develop relationships among those statements;[13]
- **spatial intelligence** - "... the capacities to perceive the visual world accurately, to perform transformations and modifications upon one's initial perceptions, and to be able to re-create aspects of one's visual experience, even in the absence of relevant physical stimuli." (14)
- **bodily-kinesthetic intelligence** - "... the ability to use one's body in highly differentiated and skilled ways, for expressive as well as goal-directed purposes, ... and to work skillfully with objects, both those that involve the finer motor movements of one's fingers and hands and those that exploit gross motor movements of the body." (15)
- **intrapersonal intelligence** - the capacity to have "access to one's own feeling life - one's range of affects or emotions; the capacity instantly to effect discriminations among these feelings and, eventually, to label them, to enmesh them in symbolic codes, to draw upon them as a means of understanding and guiding one's behavior." (16)
- **interpersonal intelligence** - "the ability to notice and make distinctions among other individuals and, in

particular, among their moods, temperaments, motivations and intentions." (17)

My *first* argument with the above-outlined theory of mul-tiple intelligences (or "M.I." as Gardner refers to it) is simply on the grounds of common sense. We all know people whom we describe as being particularly "talented" in some area of life (a musician, golfer, artist, auto mechanic, mathematician, etc.); or we say, "That person really has the ability to get along with other people." - but, we have not typically used the term "intelligence" synonymously to describe such abilities. And this is confirmed by a quick check of a dictionary definition of "intellect" (the root word of intelligence) - "The power or faculty of knowing as distinguished from the power to feel and to will; especially the power of reasoning, judging, comprehending, etc.; understanding."[18]

Yet, Gardner seems unclear and ambiguous on this important distinction, interchanging freely the terms talent, skill, ability and capacity with "intelligence." An ability, or being able to do something, is a much more all-encompassing, integrative act than cognition alone, as, for example, any modern-day athlete can tell us. Baseball players are incorporating more than a "bodily-kinesthetic intelligence" in such an act as hitting a baseball - from studying video tapes of their swing with the baseball bat, analyzing each pitcher's strengths and weaknesses and remembering how they were pitched to the last time, to doing various physical exercises to develop their hand-eye coordination, as well as mathematical analysis of the speed of the baseball and the arc of the swing of their bat while simultaneously changing the position of their feet in order to hit a curve ball either just before it breaks or just after it drops - a very complex human behavior involving much learning and practice to perfect.

If this theory was called "multiple abilities" we would hardly take notice, and the educational implications would be clear. For years high school guidance counselors have asked students to rank or rate their various abilities in helping them to develop their programs of study and possible career choices using such instruments as the Harrington-O'Shea "Career Decision-Making System"[19] with its self-assessment list of fourteen (14) abilities - artistic, musical, computational, mathematical, scien-tific, linguistic, mechanical, manual, spatial, social, teaching, persuasive, leadership, and clerical - which seem more useful than Gardner's list. And as educators we have (or should have) been encouraging our secondary school students to try and develop as many of these abilities as possible, to become "well-rounded." Rather than Gardner's recommendations, such as -

> ...it is a principle (sic) assumption of this study that individuals are not at all alike in their cognitive potentials and their intellectual styles and that education can be more properly carried out if it is tailored to the abilities and needs of the particular individuals involved."[20]

The *second* basis for refuting Gardner's MI theory is that it is *not* as scientific as he would have us believe. On the one hand, in presenting the overall evidence in support of MI, he states:

> ... I believe that the most valuable (and least misleading) information is likely to come from a deep knowledge of the nervous system; how it is organized, how it develops, how it breaks down. Findings from the brain, in my view, serve as the court of last resort, the ultimate arbiter among competing accounts of cognition.[21]

Then, in presenting his criteria for the selection of each of the multiple of intelligences, Gardner states:

> At present, however, it must be admitted that the selection (or rejection) of a candidate intelligence is reminiscent more of an artistic judgment than a scientific assessment.... Where my procedure does take a scientific turn is in the making public of the grounds for judgment, so that other investigators can review the evidence and draw their own conclusions.[22]

I suggest that there is exceedingly more to scientific endeavor than merely making one's work public - any writer or speechmaker on any topic does this all the time, and is hardly engaged (or sees himself as engaged) in doing science.

Nor do I feel that Gardner's MI theory warrants the Kuhnian label of a major "paradigm shift" - this is a gross misuse and misrepresentation of Thomas Kuhn's work.[23] To begin with I think it is highly questionable as to whether or not the progress or history of studying the mind and cognition can be viewed in the same way as scientific developments, as Kuhn notes when he states:

> Though scientific development may resemble that in other fields more closely than has often been supposed, it is also *strikingly different*... To say, for example, that the sciences, at least after a certain point in their development, progress in a way that other fields do not, cannot have been all wrong, whatever progress itself may

be.[24] (emphasis mine)

Gardner would have us believe that MI is a major new theory "... whose time has come"[25] as a result of his producing a "... confluence of a large body of evidence from a variety of sources"[26], and that he is engaged in genuine "science," introducing "novel scientific concepts" and "potentially useful scientific constructs."[27] I do not feel that MI warrants the lofty status of a genuine Kuhnian "paradigm theory," but, at best, is one of many ideas being debated in a "pre-paradigm" period of inquiry into human cognition. As Kuhn points out:

> ... not all theories are paradigm theories. Both during pre-paradigm periods and during the crises that lead to large-scale changes of paradigm, scientists usually point the way to discovery.... Only as experiment and tentative theory are together articulated to a match does the discovery emerge and the theory become a paradigm.[28]

I feel Gardner's particular use of anthropology and cultural studies as support for his theory is highly questionable, also, and hardly "scientific." Specifically, in his chapter on "spatial intelligence," Gardner discusses what he considers evidence from a "cultural perspective," describing several examples of "... the types of spatial intelligence that have developed among the Gikwe bushmen of the Kalahari, livestock recognition ability among the Kikuyu of Kenya, bean-game playing ability among Tanzanian children, and others, giving considerable attention in this chapter and in chapter 13 ("The Education of Intelligences") to the navigational ability of the Puluwat people of the Caroline Islands in the South Seas.

I object to the use of this "evidence" on two grounds -

first, the fact that specific people in a specific culture or subculture at a specific point in history possess unique skills seems to provide little "scientific" support for the MI theory; and second, the description of such people as uni-dimensional, possessed of one "intelligence," and by implication, devoid of others. Regarding the former, when I was working on a UNESCO biology project in Ghana, Africa, I encountered an amazing range of abilities among the numerous tribes or subcultures of Ghana, from the seacoast to the rain forest to the guinea-savannah. For example, in and around Kumasi are what are considered by many to be the finest wood-carvers in all of Africa (indeed some would even say the world), perhaps attributable from Gardner's type of analysis to the unique types of wood (e.g., mahogany, ebony, etc.) available in the rain forest, and the semi-tropical climate which makes year-round outdoor wood-carving possible.

Yet, this hardly describes all the people of that south-central region of Ghana where I also encountered incredible musicians, clever craftsmen fashioning tools on a crude hand forge from used auto and truck parts, as well as highly skilled scientists and mathematicians at the University of Science and Technology, to mention but a few. Thus, I could hardly describe these people as possessed of only one "intelligence," and I would be greatly concerned if Ghanian educators were to take Gardner's theory seriously and develop only certain abilities of their youth, such as wood-carving. Finally, to stress again my criticism that these "intelligences" of MI are really simply skills or abilities, it seems the Puluwats understand this difference when Gardner reports them as responding to a query as follows - "Asked whom they consider 'intelligent,' the natives are likely to mention statesmen or others who have good judgment."[30]

The *third* area for refuting Gardner's MI theory is that of his limited, incomplete and questionable use of research from the neurosciences. Again remembering the paramount importance Gardner attributes to this line of evidence, it seems instructive to begin here by looking at his overview of "Intelligence: Earlier Views" (chapter 2). Specifically Gardner outlines three major "paradigms" of cognitive theorists - intelligence testing, Piagetian theory, and information processing psychology.[31] Yet, this seems wholly inadequate and an all too brief review of what I consider to be more the pre-paradigm ideas existent among today's theorists.

Gardner fails even to mention, for example, such current theories of how the brain functions as the cluster model[32], the feature-extractor model or the cooperative model[33], and he doesn't even acknowledge one of the potentially most useful current advancements in intelligence testing, the Learning Potential Assessment Device of Reuven Feuerstein.[34] Furthermore, Gardner's attempt to define the "Biological Foundations of Intelligence" (chapter 3) as "... increasingly persuasive evidence for functional units in the nervous system"[35] is hardly the all-encompassing *sine qua non* he would have us believe. By way of summary, Gardner's position is as follows:

There are units subserving microscopic abilities in the individual columns of the sensory or frontal areas (of the brain); and there are much larger units, visible to inspection, which serve more complex and molar brain functions, like linguistic or spatial processing. These suggest a biological basis for specialized intelligences.[36]

Two examples should at least raise major questions with this generalization. First, there is a sizeable body of neuroanatomy and physiology research that would locate the region of "intellect" (the area from which higher order cognition or synthesized understandings emerge), not in several discrete packages as Gardner states, but as described below:

> The different sensory association areas coordinate their functioning in a portion of the brain in the neighborhood of the beginning of the lateral sulcus in the left cerebral hemisphere. In this area, the auditory, visual and somasthetic association areas all come together. This overall association area is sometimes called the *gnostic area* (nos'tik: 'knowledge' G).[37]

Secondly, despite Gardner's attempt to use brain damage and/or surgery as "...the single most instructive line of evidence regarding those distinctive abilities or computations that lie at the core of a human intelligence"[38] . there is at least one cognitive function for which the research does not fit, namely, memory. To cite Leslie Hart's summary of this area of brain research:

> Evidence is abundant that memory as a function *does not have a specific location in the brain; nor do specific bits of memory.* Enormous amounts of animal and human brains can be cut, or destroyed by lesions or lack of

> blood supply, without destroying memory - as we would expect if it had a location.[39] (emphasis mine)

Gardner dispenses with such contradictory evidence as an exception to his MI theory and moves on; hardly an adequate response for one who seems to see himself as a Copernicus among cognitive theorists.

The *fourth* and most important basis for refuting Gardner's MI theory is the danger inherent in the educational implications and recommendations for policy changes he urges. As part of the preface to his book, Howard Gardner includes a "Note on the Project on Human Potential" in which he states:

> In 1979, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, concerned with supporting appropriate innovations in education to *benefit the disadvantaged*, asked the Harvard Graduate School of Education to assess the state of scientific knowledge concerning human potential and its realization and to summarize the findings in a form that would assist educational policy and practice *throughout the world*... The present volume is the first in a series to be issued under the aegis of the Harvard Project.[40] (emphases mine)

It is this concern for the education of the people of developing nations which worries me considerably. There is an initial, albeit perhaps minor, contradiction when one opens the cover to *Frames of Mind* to discover the price of $23.50. Does Gardner or Harvard intend to use some of the funds of the van Leer Foundation to distribute the book free to educators in developing nations? (I should probably not even mention such a thing since I am arguing against the book and its use by educational practitioners altogether!) Of greater concern is the almost Jansen-like view of the predetermined nature of Gardner's multiple intelligences when he notes - "The plan for ultimate growth is certainly there in the genome: and, even given fairly wide latitude (or stressful circumstances), development is likely to proceed along well-canalized avenues."[41] Or, later, when urging the development of tests to determine an individual's "intellectual profile" (fortunately no such tests exist yet), Gardner states:

> My own belief is that one could assess an individual's intellectual potentials quite early in life, *perhaps even in infancy*. At that time, intellectual strengths and weaknesses would emerge most readily if individuals were given the opportunity to learn to recognize certain patterns and were tested on their capacities to remember these from one day to the next.[42] (emphasis mine)

For even though he goes on to point out that such an early diagnosis also "... affords an opportunity to bolster those intellectual endowments that seem relatively modest", I am afraid the emphasis which most educators are going to glean from the whole MI theory is that which Nicholas Anastasiow of Hunter College, City College of New York, summarizes in his recent review of *Frames of Mind* -

> .. he (Gardner) has come to the conclusion that brain functions at all levels of human development are modulated by *strong genetic scheduling*, which can be taken advantage of in developing the seven different kinds of human intelligences that are the subject of this book.[44] (emphasis mine)

Or finally, when Gardner suggests - "Indeed, the cost of attempting to treat all individuals the same, or of trying to convey knowledge to individuals in ways uncongenial to their preferred modes of learning, may be great..."[45] What of our country's supposed commitment to equal educational opportunity in an open, democratic society, where everyone has a chance to develop his or her full potential?

I maintain these so-called "intelligences" are *not* separate entities and that in order to enhance any young person's abilities, we need to develop them all as fully as humanly possible. And, intended or not, too many of my colleagues are likely to read *Frames of Mind* as *the* theoretical basis for a sort of mega-tracking system, where, beginning in the cradle, children will be "intellectually profiled" into little musicians, artists, mathematicians, scientists and the like, before they have even had a chance to think for themselves!

In concluding, I suggest that, if educational practitioners are genuinely concerned with the human potential, particularly of the disadvantaged, and are seeking a theoretical basis from a study of current brain research and cognitive theory, they might turn to *Reuven Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment: Redevelopment of Cognitive Functions of Retarded Performers* and Leslie Hart's *Human Brain and Human Learning*. I also will simply make the plea that if my critique of Howard Gardner's theory is too harsh, then I hope others will at least look critically and cautiously at his "idea" of multiple intelligences. For we educational administrators and school principals might do well to heed the advice on the buttons worn by many of our young students today which simply proclaims - "Question Authority!"

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EDUCATING FOR PEACE

by Phil Gang, PhD

Dateline: Copenhagen, 1937; Maria Montessori Convenes the international conference,*"Educate for Peace."*
Dateline: Italy, 1949; Garzanti Editore publishes *"Educazione e Pace"* by Maria Montessori

In the preface to that book, the editors write:

> Once outside Italy, the threat of war-feared by everyone in Europe-began to weigh heavily upon (Maria Montessori). Her profound concern did not stem from the political problem of war, but rather from the human problem. It moved her deeply, the same way the problem of the early years of childhood had haunted her in her youth..... Just as her experience with children had inspired her to uncover the laws of human development, so the problem of war now caused her to engage in a passionate search for new human truths. Taking as a point of departure her firm conviction that the child must be our teacher as well as her ideas regarding the free, harmonious, and balanced development of the individual human being, she moved on to consider the problems of human and social development and began a crusade in the name of education, proclaiming: *"Establishing a lasting peace is the work of education; all politics can do is keep us out of war."*
>
> As illuminating as flashes of lightning, her ideas brought hope to the countries of Europe. Political groups and associations rallied around her, embracing her faith in education and in the redemption to which children could lead the way.

In these troubled times of conflict and violence there is no more important work in the world than to reconstruct education... an education based on universal understanding and global-ecological responsibility. Politics have not kept us out of war. It is up to the educators of the world to create a lasting peace. What are the elements of an educational approach that transform consciousness? Let me suggest a few windows of opportunity:

1. liberty
2. responsibility
3. spirituality
4. conscious evolution

Liberty. Liberty is the base of the human experience. Without the freedom to explore, investigate and discover, early humans might have remained at the level of their mammalian cousins. Instead, they were privileged to learn by doing... to make mistakes and to improve upon their life style. From an anthropological perspective, each human being recapitulates the life of the species. That is, we "experience" the same stages of development and their accompanying needs.

Through free choice children express and strengthen their individuality "*enabling*" the development of self confidence and integrity. Freedom of choice reinforces the construction of a strong will and independent thought. Children *construct* their individual wills by a process of self education... developing the will by making decisions.

Responsibility. The boundary of liberty is the domain of responsibility. Every human being needs opportunities to acquire social, physical, moral and spiritual responsibility. As children move through different stages, responsibility expands in an ever increasing circle, ultimately reaching what is known as *universal* responsibility. Article Seven of the Declaration of Human Responsibility for Peace and Sustainable Development states[1]:

> Of all living beings, human beings have the unique capacity to decide consciously whether to protect or harm the quality and conditions of life on Earth. In reflecting on the fact that they belong to the natural world and occupy a special position as participants in the evolution of natural processes, people can develop, on the basis of altruism, compassion and love, a sense of universal responsibility towards the world as an integral whole, towards the protection of nature and the promotion of the highest potential for change, with a view to creating these conditions which enable them to achieve the highest level of evolutionary potential.

In the healthy school, responsibility is built upon through experience and natural consequences. Children are provided opportunities through social life experiences to align themselves with the highest values needed in a democratic society.

Spirituality. Spirituality is a respect and reverence for life and the unfolding consciousness of humanity. This is deeply imbedded in the holistic approach to education. If you take out the spiritual component the approach is reduced to a method or a subject and the whole point is missed. The evolution of higher order educational forms can progress only insofar as we address the need for spiritual renewal. In "New Genesis," Robert Muller writes:

> Spirituality starts with these questions: What is life? Why am I on this Earth? .....For what and to whom must I be grateful? .....What does my short-lived but so magnificent spark of consciousness mean in the universe?

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[1] In October, 1989 this Declaration was presented to the United Nations by the Government of Costa Rica. (Document No. A/44/626)

Educating for peace goes beyond preparation in knowledge and culture. It must consider the moral and ethical values of the 'good' society. In every school subject there is an activity of the human spirit. It is this spiritual component that differentiates a holistic learning environment from the ordinary school. The latter operates at the ordinary level of manipulation while the former leads to higher levels of consciousness.

Conscious Evolution. At the heart of the notion of conscious evolution is the idea of responsibility. It is a recognition that ***I*** am part of a larger wholeness of life, a 'great chain of being' as the Medieval scholars might put it, and that the well-being of that wholeness is my responsibility too.

This process begins with the very young child by creating an atmosphere of trust. Trust is the glue that empowers the infant to seek his or her own way in the world and to respect and trust others. Through exposure to the evolutionary cycle of the universe and life on Earth, elementary children discover the cosmic interdependencies that have given rise to consciousness and altruism. In a 1946 lecture Montessori proclaimed:

> Cosmic charity is universal. It requires the lifelong dedication of each man to all mankind.... It lifts up the hearts of all men and helps civilization rise to higher levels as it ensures the existence of each and all.
>
> The trees that purify the air, the herbs that capture vitamins from sunlight, the coral that filter the sea whose creatures would die if there were no such life forms to keep the water pure, the animals that populate the Earth are unconscious of their cosmic mission, but without them the harmony of creation would not exist and life would cease. This harmony, based on the needs of each and all, is of divine origin. That is why man has no

> conception of it and perceives only his immediate needs. But if man could raise his consciousness to a higher level he would awaken and be aware of the disinterested goodness and self sacrifice of his fellows.[2]
>
> If we educate children to see this, they will ready themselves to feel gratitude to all mankind. This is an affective aspect of our 'cosmic education.'

Older children can learn about conscious evolutionary service through directed studies, dialogue and activities that allow them to participate in service-oriented projects. Integral to this approach is exposure to indigenous peoples and their belief systems.

Conclusions. As educators we have no more important task than to work for the transformation of consciousness. We need to empower the rising generation with an understanding of personal, social and ecological responsibility as well as global interdependency. We need to model the holistic paradigm in our interactions with learners. We need to work towards creating human processes that enable.

Perhaps the Persian Gulf call to arms might be the clarion call in disguise for the intensification of our work for the child.

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[2] In the 45 years since this was stated, there has been an acceleration of humanity's understanding of these principles. Although initially owned by the eastern metaphysicians and western spiritual leaders, today many people of the Earth community accept this reality. It is not only found in the "new age" movement, but in the heart of the scientific community. These ideas have been propelled to the forefront by modern day quantum physicists and biologists like Fritjof Capra and James Lovelock. Capra explains how physics has come full circle to underscore a spiritual reality. And Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis describes the earth as an interdependent living organism.

Perhaps it is time to rededicate ourselves to actively pursue the vision of possibility for a new education, one that liberates and contributes to the evolution of humankind. With the year 2000 approaching, many people believe that humanity is ready for a major shift forward. Let us participate in this shift by opening the doors of human responsibility and global awareness to our planet's children.

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WHY SCHOOLS DON'T EDUCATE

by John Taylor Gatto

I accept this award on behalf of all the fine teachers I've known over the years who've struggled to make their transactions with children honorable ones: men and women who are never complacent, always questioning, always wrestling to define and redefine endlessly what the word "education" should mean. A "Teacher of the Year" is not the best teacher around—those people are too quiet to be easily uncovered—but a standard-bearer, symbolic of these private people who spend their lives gladly in the service of children. This is their award as well as mine.

We live in a time of great social crisis. Our children rank at the bottom of nineteen industrial nations in reading, writing, and arithmetic. The world's narcotic economy is based upon our own consumption of this commodity. If we didn't buy so many powdered dreams the business would collapse—and schools are an important sales outlet. Our teenage suicide rate is the highest in the world—and suicidal kids are rich kids for the most part, not the poor. In Manhattan seventy percent of all new marriages last less than five years.

Our school crisis is a reflection of this greater social crisis. We seem to have lost our identity. Children and old people are penned up and locked away from the business of the world to a degree without precedent; nobody talks to them anymore. Without children and old people mixing in daily life, a community has no future and no past, only a continuous present. In fact, the name "community" hardly applies to the way we interact with each other. We live in networks, not communities, and everyone I know is lonely because of that. In some strange way school is a major actor in this tragedy, just as it is a major actor in the widening gulf among social classes. Using school as a sorting mechanism, we appear to be on the way to creating a caste system, complete with untouchables who wander through subway trains begging and sleep on the streets.

I've noticed a fascinating phenomenon in my twenty-five years of teaching—that schools and schooling are increasingly irrelevant to the great enterprises of the planet. No one believes anymore that scientists are trained in science classes, or politicians in civics classes, or poets in English classes. The truth is that schools don't really teach anything except how to obey orders. This is a great mystery to me because thousands of humane, caring people work in schools as teachers and aides and administrators, but the abstract logic of the institution overwhelms their individual contributions. Although teachers do care and do work very, very hard, the institution is psychopathic; it has no conscience. It rings a bell, and the young man in the middle of writing a poem must close his notebook and move to a different cell, where he learns that man and monkeys derive from a common ancestor.

Our form of compulsory schooling is an invention of the State of Massachusetts around 1850. It was resisted—sometimes with gun—by an estimated eighty percent of the Massachusetts population, the last outpost in Barnstable on Cape Cod not surrendering its children until the 1880s, when the area was seized by militia and children marched to school under guard.

Now here is a curious idea to ponder. Senator Ted Kennedy's office released a paper not too long ago claiming that prior to compulsory education the state literacy rate was ninety-eight percent, and after it the figure never again reached above ninety-one percent, where it stands in 1990. I hope that interests you.

Here is another curiosity to think about. The home-schooling movement has quietly grown to a size where one and a half million young people are being educated entirely by their own parents. Last month the education press reported the amazing news that children schooled at home seem to be five or even ten years ahead of their formally trained peers in their ability to think.

I don't think we'll get rid of schools anytime soon, certainly not in my lifetime, but if we're going to change what's rapidly becoming a disaster of ignorance, we need to realize that the school institution "schools" very well, but it does not "educate"—that's inherent in the design of the thing. It's not the fault of bad teachers or too little money spent. It's just impossible for education and schooling ever to be the same thing.

Schools were designed by Horace Mann and Bamas Sears and W.R.Harper of the University of Chicago and Thomdyke of Columbia Teachers College and others to be instruments of the scientific management of a mass population. Schools are intended to produce, through the application of formulae, formulaic human beings whose behavior can be predicted and controlled.

To a very great extent schools succeed in doing this. But our society is disintegrating, and in such a society the only successful people are self-reliant, confident, and individualistic—because the community life which protects the dependent and the weak is dead. The products of schooling are, as I've said, irrelevant. Well-schooled people are irrelevant. They can sell film and razor blades, push paper and talk on telephones, or sit mindlessly before a flickering computer terminal, but as human beings they are useless—useless to others and useless to themselves.

The daily misery around us is, I think, in large measure caused by the fact that—as Paul Goodman put it thirty years ago— we force children to grow up absurd . Any reform in schooling has to deal with its absurdities.

It is absurd and anti-life to be part of a system that compels you to sit in confinement with people of exactly the same age and social class. That system effectively cuts you off from the immense diversity of life and the synergy of variety. It cuts you off from your own past and future, sealing you in a continuous present much the same way television does.

It is absurd and anti-life to be part of a system that compels you to listen to a stranger reading poetry when you want to learn to construct buildings, or to sit with a stranger discussing the construction of buildings when you want to read poetry. It is absurd and anti-life to move from cell to cell at the sound of a gong for every day of your youth, in an institution that allows you no privacy and even follows you into the sanctuary of your home, demanding that you do its "homework."

"How will they learn to read?!" you say, and my answer is, "Remember the lessons of Massachusetts. " When children are given whole lives instead of age-graded ones in cellblocks, they learn to read,write, and do arithmetic with ease if those things make sense in the life that unfolds around them.

But keep in mind that in the United States almost nobody who reads, writes, or does arithmetic gets much respect. We are a land of talkers; we pay talkers the most and admire talkers the most and so our children talk constantly, following the public models of television and schoolteachers. It is very difficult to teach the "basics" anymore because they really aren't basic to the society we've made.

Two institutions at present control our children's lives—television and schooling, in that order. Both of these reduce the real world of wisdom, fortitude, temperance, and justice to a never-ending, non-stop abstraction. In centuries past the time of a child and adolescent would be occupied in real work, real charity, real adventures, and the real search for mentors who might teach what one really wanted to learn. A great deal of time was spent in community pursuits, practicing affection, meeting and studying every level of the community, learning how to make a home, and dozens of other tasks necessary to becoming a whole man or woman.

But here is the calculus of time the children I teach must deal with:

Out of the one hundred sixty-eight hours in each week, my children sleep fifty-six. That leaves them one hundred twelve hours a week out of which to fashion a self.

My children watch fifty-five hours of television a week, according to recent reports. That leaves them fifty-seven hours a week in which to grow up.

My children attend school thirty hours a week, use about eight hours getting ready, going and coming home, and spend an average of seven hours a week in homework—a total of forty-five hours. During that time they are under constant surveillance, have no private time or private space, and are disciplined if they try to assert individuality in the use of time or space. That leaves twelve hours a week out of which to create a unique consciousness. Of course my kids eat, too, and that takes some time—not much, because we've lost the tradition of family dining. If we allot three hours a week to evening meals, we arrive at a net amount of private time for each child of nine hours.

It's not enough. It's not enough, is it? The richer the kid, of course, the less television he watches, but the rich kid's time is just as narrowly proscribed by a broader catalogue of commercial entertainments and his inevitable assignment to a series of private lessons in areas seldom of his choice.

And these things are, oddly enough, just a more cosmetic way to create dependent human beings, unable to fill their own hours, unable to initiate lines of meaning to give substance and pleasure to their existence. It's a national disease, this dependency and aimlessness, and I think schooling and television and lessons—the entire Chautauqua idea—have a lot to do with it.

Think of the things that are killing us as a nation: drugs, brainless competition, recreational sex, the pornography of violence, gambling, alcohol, and the worst pornography of all — lives devoted to buying things, accumulation as a philosophy. All are addictions of dependent personalities and that is what our brand of schooling must inevitably produce.

I want to tell you what the effect is on children of taking all their time—time they need to grow up—and forcing them to spend it on abstractions. No reform that doesn't attack these specific pathologies will be anything more than a facade.

1 . The children I teach are indifferent to the adult world . This defies the experience of thousands of years. A close study of what big people were up to was always the most exciting occupation of youth, but nobody wants to grow up these days, and who can blame them? Toys are us.

2. The children I teach have almost no curiosity, and what little they do have is transitory; they cannot concentrate for very long, even on things they choose to do. Can you see a connection between the bells ringing again and again to change classes and this phenomenon of evanescent attention?

3. The children I teach have a poor sense of the future, of how tomorrow is inextricably linked to today. They live in a

continuous present; the exact moment they are in is the boundary of their consciousness.

4. The children I teach are a-historical; they have no sense of how the past has predestined their own present, limiting their choices, shaping their values and lives.

5. The children I teach are cruel to each other; they lack compassion for misfortune, they laugh at weakness, they have contempt for people whose need for help shows too plainly.

6. The children I teach are uneasy with intimacy or candor. They cannot deal with genuine intimacy because of a lifelong habit of preserving a secret self inside an outer personality made up of artificial bits and pieces of behavior borrowed from television, or acquired to manipulate teachers. Because they are not who they represent themselves to be, the disguise wears thin in the presence of intimacy, so intimate relationships have to be avoided.

7. The children I teach are materialistic, following the lead of schoolteachers who materialistically "grade" everything—and television mentors who offer everything in the world for sale.

8. The children I teach are dependent, passive, and timid in the presence of new challenges. This timidity is frequently masked by surface bravado, or by anger or aggressiveness, but underneath is a vacuum without fortitude.

I could name a few other conditions that school reform will have to tackle if our national decline is to be arrested, but by now you will have grasped my thesis, whether you agree with it or not. Either schools, television, or both have caused these pathologies. It's a simple matter of arithmetic. Between schooling and television, all the time children have is eaten up. That's what has destroyed the American family; it no longer is a factor in the education of its own children.

What can be done?

First, we need a ferocious national debate that doesn't quit, day after day, year after year, the kind of continuous emphasis that journalism finds boring. We need to scream and argue about this school thing until it is fixed or broken beyond repair, one or the other. If we can fix it, fine; if we cannot, then the success of home-schooling shows a different road that has great promise . Pouring the money back into family education might kill two birds with one stone, repairing families as it repairs children.

Genuine reform is possible, but it shouldn't cost anything. We need to rethink the fundamental premises of schooling and decide *what* it is we want all children to learn, and *why*. For one hundred forty years this nation has tried to impose objectives from a lofty command center made up of "experts," a central elite of social engineers. It hasn't worked. It won't work. It is a gross betrayal of the democratic promise that once made this nation a noble experiment. The Russian attempt to control Eastern Europe has exploded before our eyes. Our own attempt to impose the same sort of central orthodoxy, using the schools as an instrument, is also coming apart at the seams, albeit more slowly and painfully. It doesn't work because its fundamental premises are mechanical, antihuman, and hostile to family life. Lives can be controlled by machine education, but they will always fight back with weapons of social pathology—drugs, violence, self-destruction, indifference, and the symptoms I see in the children I teach.

It's high time we looked backward to regain an educational philosophy that works. One I like particularly well has been a favorite of the ruling classes of Europe for thousands of years. I think it works just as well for poor children as for rich ones. I use as much of it as I can manage in my own teaching; as much, that is, as I can get away with, given the present institution of compulsory schooling.

At the core of this élite system of education is the belief that self-knowledge is the only basis of true knowledge. Everywhere in this system, at every age, you will find arrangements that place the child *alone* in an unguided setting with a problem to solve. Sometimes the problem is fraught with great risks, such as the problem of galloping a horse or making it jump, but that, of course, is a problem successfully solved by thousands of elite children before the age of ten. Can you imagine anyone who had mastered such a challenge ever lacking confidence in his ability to do anything? Sometimes the problem is that of mastering solitude, as Thoreau did at Walden pond, or Einstein did in the Swiss customs house.

One of my former students, Roland Legiardi-Laura, though both his parents were dead and he had no inheritance, took a bicycle across the United States alone when he was hardly out of boyhood. Is it any wonder that in manhood he made a film about Nicaragua, although he had no money and no prior experience with film-making, and that it was an international awardwinner—even though his regular work was as a carpenter?

Right now we are taking from our children the time they need to develop self-knowledge. That has to stop. We have to invent school experiences that give a lot of that time back. We need to trust children from a very early age with independent study, perhaps arranged in school, but which takes place *away* from the institutional setting. We need to invent a curriculum where each kid has a chance to develop uniqueness and self-reliance.

A short time ago, I took seventy dollars and sent a twelve-year-old girl with her non-English speaking mother on a bus down the New Jersey coast. She took the police chief of Sea Bright to lunch and apologized for polluting his beach with a discarded Gatorade bottle. In exchange for this public apology I had arranged for the girl to have a one-day apprenticeship in small-town police procedures. A few days later, two more of my twelve-year-old kids traveled alone from Harlem to West 31st Street, where they began an apprenticeship with a newspaper editor. Next week, three of my kids will find themselves in the middle of the Jersey swamps at 6 in the morning studying the mind of a trucking company president as he dispatches eighteen-wheelers to Dallas, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

Are these "special" children in a "special" program? They're just nice kids from Central Harlem, bright and alert, but so badly schooled when they came to me that most of them couldn't add or subtract with any fluency. And not a single one knew the population of New York City, or how far it is from New York to California.

Does that worry me? Of course. But I am confident that as they gain self-knowledge they'll also become self-teachers— and only self-teaching has any lasting value.

We've got to give kids independent time right away because that is the key to self-knowledge, and we must reinvolve them with the real world as fast as possible so that the independent time can be spent on something other than more abstractions. This is an emergency. It requires drastic action to correct. Our children are dying like flies in our schools. Good schooling or bad schooling, it's all the same—irrelevant.

What else does a restructured school system need? It needs to stop being a parasite on the working community. I think we need to made community service a required part of schooling. It is the quickest way to give young children real responsibility.

For five years I ran a guerrilla school program where I had every kid, rich and poor, smart and dipsy, give three hundred twenty hours a year of hard community service. Dozens of those kids came back to me years later, and told me that this one experience changed their lives, taught them to see in new ways, to rethink goals and values. It happened when they were thirteen, in my Lab School program—only made possible because my rich school district was in chaos. When "stability" returned, the Lab closed. It was too successful, at too small a cost, to be allowed to continue. We made the expensive, elite programs look bad.

There is no shortage of real problems in this city. Kids can be asked to help solve them in exchange for the respect and attention of the adult world. Good for kids, good for all of us.

Independent study, community service, adventures in experience, large doses of privacy and solitude, a thousand different apprenticeships—these are all powerful, cheap, and effective ways to start a real reform of schooling. But no large-scale reform is ever going to repair our damaged children and our damaged society until we force the idea of "school" open—to include family as the main engine of education. The Swedes realized this in 1976, when they effectively abandoned the system of adopting unwanted children and instead spent national time and treasure on reinforcing the original family so that children born to Swedes *were* wanted. They reduced the number of unwanted Swedish children from 6,000 in 1976 to fifteen in 1986. So it can be done. The Swedes just got tired of paying for the social wreckage caused by children not raised by their natural parents, so they did something about it. We can, too.

Family is the main engine of education. If we use schooling to break children away from parents—and make no mistake, that has been the central function of schools since John Cotton announced it as the purpose of the Bay Colony schools in 1650 and Horace Mann announced it as the purpose of Massachusetts schools in 1850—we're going to continue to have the horror show we have right now.

The curriculum of family is at the heart of any good life.

We've gotten away from that curriculum—it's's time to return to it. The way to sanity in education is for our schools to take the lead in releasing the stranglehold of institutions on family life, to promote during school time confluences of parent and child that will strengthen family bonds. That was my real purpose in sending the girl and her mother down the Jersey coast to meet the police chief.

I have many ideas to make a family curriculum, and my guess is that a lot of you will have many ideas, too, once you begin to think about it. Our greatest problem in getting the kind of grassroots thinking going that could reform schooling is that we have large, vested interests profiting from schooling just exactly as it is, despite rhetoric to the contrary.

We have to demand that new voices and new ideas get a hearing, my ideas and yours. We've all had a bellyful of authorized voices on television and in the press. A decadelong, free-for-all debate is called for now, not any more "expert" opinions. Experts in education have never been right; their "solutions" are expensive, self-serving, and always involve further centralization. Enough. Time for a return to democracy, individuality, and family.

John Gatto taught seventh grade at Junior High School 54 on Manhattan's Upper West Side at the time he gave this address. He had been teaching in public schools for more than twenty-five years! - and had been made winner of the Teacher of the Year Award for New York City. This is his acceptance speech. It was first published in *The Sun* magazine, but is reprinted from *A Voice for Children* out of Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502.

THE ENERGETIC STARVATION OF SCHOOL CHILDREN

BY ALAN J. SCHWARTZ, PhD.

I am observing in the neonatal unit of the Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital in New York City and I am holding a tiny one-and-a-half pound infant, born prematurely. I candle this wee figure of a human being, trying to put out some of my own adult energy, trying to make contact. I feel my face grow hot and my hands holding the blanket grow hot. Something happens to my being and I feel my chest "melt" with a burning sensation and my eyes moisten. My breathing becomes deep and somehow I feel connected to this child. The infant begins to move, its lips curled into a gnome-like smile. The little hands and arms move almost frantically. The fists open and close the the whole body makes a writhing motion within the cave of the blanket. I hear a tiny sounds, not a cry, something like the sound of a sigh before sleep. Some kind of symbiotic unity takes place. Even though the baby is almost weightless, I feel his strong presence in my energy space. Suddenly, we are charged with energy, the two of us. He drifts off into a sweet sleep, and I begin to look about the unit. My eyes are seeing with crystal clarity, my breathing slow and deep, my self-awareness keen and confident. I feel at one with everybody in the unit, the nurses, the residents, the aides, and the infants. The interchange with that tiny baby has put me in touch with the reality of my relationship to myself and my environment. The instance has been a pure energy exchange. It has been a learning experience for me and, I suspect, for him also.

Now I know that a baby cannot communicate with my mental or even emotional structures. He, in fact, has no mental or emotional structures the way I have. Indeed, in the "bible" of neonatal textbooks, it states that from birth to 3 or 4 months, the infant has "no concept of the self and therefore no identity...."[1] I also know that a human being is composed of an organism that at maturity functions simultaneously on the three levels of body, feelings (emotions) and mind - call it my organism - he, in turn, can only engage me on the body level. The other two just haven't developed yet. All of us, in this early stage of development, engaged in human communication solely on the body level. This kind of communicative learning was nourishing enough to get us moving through our infancy and into early childhood. The body had and has a wisdom, enough wisdom to keep us alive in that so-helpless period of our lives. The body responds to love, hate and pain. Experiments using hypnosis, altered states of consciousness and gestalt techniques have enabled adults to re-experience the time before the development of mental and emotional faculties - the time of the body.

The child will grow and develop a relationship with his environment aided by nourishment in the form of food and feeling. These are necessary substances for all children, but they vary in their amounts and intensities according to the unique needs of a child - who, after all, is also a unique being.

Reich and Lowen (Wilhelm Reich and Alexander Lowen, founder and follower of a model of life based on the somatic primacy of biological energy, called 'orgone' energy by Reich, as its source and medium of vital functioning) have pointed out and defined the stages of human development in terms of their traumatic factors. They have indicated that when the organism is threatened, most importantly the ego, it will react by holding its growth in check - growth will be 'arrested.' The arresting of growth equals the arresting of the energetic flow that makes up the physical-emotional-mental being. The arresting of energetic flow in the organism is seen physically as the developing of musculature that serves to inhibit or block the body's normal movement process. Movement can be thought of as the act of growing, the act of expanding, the act of searching. Some clarification is needed about the word *searching*.

Searching, in the energetic sense, does not necessarily mean actively seeking out something. Rather, it means allowing the organism to experience its own state, its own self. Water, if unobstructed in a stream, will by the nature of its flow, *search out* spaces around rocks and earth to form little pools and streamlets. It, therefore, continuously re-experiences its own state. If held behind a dam, it forms a massive, static structure. If the state is one in which joy is the priority factor of its life at the given moment, so be it. If the state is one in which authentic loneliness is to be felt, so be it. It is with the experiencing of its authentic self (state) that the organism finds out it is truly alive. When I am aware of this, I am at that moment invincible.

I had an experience recently which illustrates this statement. I was completing a therapy session with John Pierrakos (former partner of Alexander Lowen) in which I became aware of a feeling of intense love for him. Along with the feeling of intense love came the feeling of intense power, physical power. I felt my strength. I felt really invincible. When I left the office and walked the length of 57th Street in New York City, I became aware of noticing that the cars and buses seemed smaller, that I seemed bigger. I was not floating in ecstasy, but walking with a sense of firmness which made me feel authentically strong (see Lowen's remarks on "highs" in *Bioenergetics*).[2] I *was* really strong. It was no illusion. I saw with piercing sharpness. I was acutely aware of my environment. It was O.K. - where I was - I was grounded or centred or whatever. The semantic didn't mean anything. I was there. For some hours afterwards, I felt the value of me and of my surroundings. I learned from me and I learned from my surroundings. I and my surroundings were of value to me. I trusted me and I trusted my surroundings. We learned from each other. It was as it should be. The universe was as it should be. I was the baby in the ICU at Columbia-Presbyterian and I was involved in a kind of natural search which I could now translate as learning from my environment. What I was in the process of learning was that my *trusting* John had brought my feeling of being grounded. That sense of grounding was so real to me that it *felt* like invincibility. As the baby in the ICU trusted in me, so I trusted in John. I had touched the beginnings of my history, and in so doing integrated my organism. It was necessary and right that I learn. I had a *right to learn..* And learning was growing. And growing was being and expanding and experiencing pleasure.

As I read and think about and work with the five characterological stages of development, my awareness is that they involve shared struggle. The oral child, for example, shares the pain of the parent who must abandon him, as well as his own pain. What inner struggles and fears go on in the parent who, in order to cope with a child's emerging sense of self, chooses to suppress the child - we can guess at or diagnose after careful study of the problem. The point is that the child surely senses the parent's struggles. When faced with the parent's acting out, he experiences his own humiliation and fear *and also* the emotional turmoil of the parent. If the quintessence of my sense of pleasure concerns a sharing factor, whether it be intra-sharing or sharing with my environment (example: the orgasm), then my development characterologically involves a relationship with this phenomenon. In order for me to *interact* with my environment, whether it be my physical environment or the environment which is my parents, I must first *react* to the energy coming from it. If the energy is threatening or traumatic, I will *act* to protect myself. Part of the reason that environmental negativity is traumatic to me is because I experience the pain behind that negativity. I, loving my parents, share the hurt and misery that causes them to seek to control me, to crush my person, to abandon me, etc...

My tendencies to displace energy upwards into the ego function in order to control my environment has its roots in the shared feelings of seduction, *learned* from a seductive parent. I acquire the technique of being able to give love, but not deeply or fully, of being able to "be there" for someone but to be there carefully so as not to expose myself to hurt or a "broken heart." I had a good teacher for both these characterological states in my mother. Even my lack of contact, my isolation, my fragmentary fears are pickups of energy coming towards me from the hostile environment of my past. I *share* that hostility and fear.

I would suggest that most western people experience a process of conditioning which, cutting across all character types, produces a state I will term *energetic starvation*. It is one in which the energy is *held down*, and it is *not* a shared state. It is a state imposed on children with a unique directness; we call it education. A rather graphic way of visualizing this state is to remember the comic strips (cartoons, funny papers, etc.). Whenever someone was hit over the head, there appeared a word over the person denoting the noise of the hitting. The word was often "thunk!" The imposed process of our educational structure upon children is the process of *thunking* rather than thinking. Thunking is dullness of thinking. Thunking is hammering down the organism so as to suppress integrated growth. By integrated growth I mean the physical, mental and emotional learning necessary for an organism to find its way naturally into maturity. Ideally, education provides a pathway for maturing energy to flow into adulthood. In reality, there is no pathway. As Haney and Zimbardo point out, "The real tragedies of our school system are not the troublemakers or even the dropouts. They are the endless procession of faceless students who go through the system quietly and unquestioningly, unobtrusive and unnoticed. They have somehow learned to inhibit individual expression of any form, whether achievement or rebellion. They have accustomed themselves to passive nonidentity and nonparticipation."[3]

I am six years old. I have developed with a minimum of neurotic tendencies over my first six years. I have been told that I am going to go to school like the other boys and girls in my neighborhood. Perhaps I am excited about this not only because of the other boys and girls in my neighborhood but because my brothers and sisters go to school. They talk about their teachers. I build a fantasy about their teachers as well as about the other children. I want to go to school too. But I am also a bit scared. It is unknown. I can only imagine it. The dark is also unknown. The other side of town is also unknown. Jumping from the top of the fence is scary because it is also unknown. But the excitement feels better than the fear of the unknown. I will not cry for my mother on the first day of school. I am excited and open to my new experience of growing. Well, really I *am* open to growing, but I'm also a wee bit nervous. After all, this is a *brand new* structure for me. I'm away from home *for the first time*. Everything will be big and new and confusing. I hope they will remember *me*. I'm a person! Don't forget me!

Notwithstanding the standout gains made by innovators like George Brown's "Confluent Education" concepts and George

'Unthunked' kid doing what comes naturally, uninterfered with

Leonard's tantalizing *Education and Ecstasy*[A], my six-year-old self is in for tough sledding. The next few years will find my six year old energy carefully and systematically held down by the institution of the thunking process. I will become part of a group called a class. This is different from the kind of group who explore life and learning, the kind of group exploration developing slowly in places like Summerhill, Detroit, and other centres of learning often labelled "alternative." I will learn to stand in line to eat, to play, to go to the library, to eliminate my waste. I will learn to lie down and rest when ordered. I will learn to play games which instruct me how to function as part of a team. I will become team-oriented. I will be part of the whole. If I choose not to become part of the whole, I will be like a "bad cell." I will be repaired by being punished. There are so many ways to be punished. My teacher will not like me. He or she will give me disapproving looks or words. I will feel no warmth from him. He won't touch me to make me feel secure. I will begin to feel different from everybody else. Maybe he will make me stay after school, or write letters home to my mother. He might make me write sentences like "I will learn to sit in my seat" many, many times. Eventually, I will learn to do things the way they want me to. By the time I am in the 5th grade, I will have learned to do things the "correct" way.

Have you ever noticed young children in roughly the 5th grade? They have a tendency to sit almost horizontally (the boys). This grade often seems to be a plateau stage where the noise and turmoil of the lower grades seem suddenly to abate.

The girls sit quietly with both feet on the floor, knees together, hands folded, like "little ladies." So picture the children: boys horizontal and girls like "little ladies." The holding down of the natural process of energetic growth has resulted in "thunked" children, thunked of life and the sense of excitement that growing and learning initiates. In fact, a far more serious phenomenon has taken place. A state has grown to exist whereby energy and its flow face a situation of starvation, brought about by the dynamics of the educational structure. The situation has not been a shared experience, but something imposed from above - from the "powers that be." The child has been deprived of awareness. He has not shared in the process. He has not even been able to look up and experience the thunking. He has both literally and metaphorically been energetically starved and his organism has temporarily stopped trying, stopped growing. He has given up.

Fortunately, this state of energetic starvation is only temporary. Whereas it is possible, in cases where thunking is most extreme, to be so held down that further growth becomes possible only with the help of competent and understanding therapy, most children merely pause in preparation for the "Roman candle" of a new and powerful energy surge. They are, of course, unaware of this coming phenomenon called *puberty*.

I am in the 6th grade. I am aware of changes going on in my body. I check my upper lip in the mirror for traces of hair. I'm sure I have the beginnings of a moustache. This excites me. There is no doubt that I'm getting hair all around my penis. I am a man. I am tough. I think about the girls in school. They are getting breasts. This excites me. Suddenly we are all becoming men and women. It feels good to touch myself and to play with my penis. I want girls to play with it. I want to play with them. My mother's breasts excite me. I wonder what my father's penis looks like. My friends and I show each other our genitals. An older boy in the neighborhood shows us how to masturbate. It is tremendously exciting. I do it every chance I get. Sometimes, when I am sitting in class, I want to masturbate. My penis gets hard. I look at the girls and imagine them naked. I imagine my female teachers naked. I imagine feeling their breasts. I feel restless. I am bored. I want to get out of that class. I want to kiss the girl next to me. Sometimes we hold hands and I get an erection in class. The teacher stops us from holding hands in class. She is a bitch. I hate her. She humiliates me. I will rip the pages of a book. I will write sexual things on the walls of the toilet. I will fight other boys. I will speak in a loud voice. I am a man.

I used to think that girls had babies if they kissed boys too much. Now I am menstruating. I know that babies are made by sexual intercourse. I don't want to get a baby. Pregnant women both scare and attract me. I love to play with and take care of babies. I am a good babysitter. I am developing breasts and my body is changing. I feel a real sense of my vagina as it moves to a new position in my body. Boys are animals but they excite me. I feel much closer to my girl friends than I ever did before. We laugh and giggle a lot about boys. My teachers are awful, especially the old ones. Some of the young ones are not ugly. One man is beautiful, I can have day dreams about him. I dream of having sexual intercourse with him. I don't dream of exactly how it happens, but I get his baby and marry him. He pays a lot of attention to one of my woman teachers. He's probably having sexual intercourse with her. That excites me. I want to look at the boys in my class a lot, but I am afraid to. They scare me. They excite me. I will be good in school. I will let the boys show off and get in trouble. They are so stupid. I wish some of them would grow up and be like my favourite movie star. He is so cool and suave. Menstruating scares me. Growing up scares me. There is no one to talk to in school. The way to get along is to behave. I will sit up in class and behave. I will get along by pleasing everybody. I will not be like that other girl who talks back to the teacher and kisses boys at lunch time. She is a bad girl. I'll bet she has sexual intercourse. She has big breasts. I'm afraid of her. I'll be good and not cause any trouble. Then everyone will like me.

The 6th grade youngster has received a 'battery recharge' from nature. The age of puberty brings about a new sense of energetic flow. The genitals are alive and seek their fulfillment. The resulting behaviour runs contrary to educational structure and policy. Sports are not enough. These manifestations of energy and their accompanying behaviour are met with renewed thunking. The aggressive flow of sexual energy is held down with a new vigour. Junior High School has long had the reputation of being a teacher-pupil wasteland. The 7th and 8th grades and sometimes into the 9th grade are periods of readjustment in which much aggressive behaviour is tried. The result is always the same. With the systematic holding down of the organism's growth and movement energetically, a slow starvation process sets in. By the time the pupil is in his 12th and final year of public education, he is again in a horizontal position in his seat. The female pupil is sitting with her legs crossed - not merely at the knees, but also with her foot tucked around the opposite leg - she has been "double-crossed!" And, in effect, she *has* been double-crossed by an educational system closely resembling, as Haney and Zimbardo point out, a prison. "Our nation's schools have turned into prisons, with guards posing as teachers, and students learning how to be docile prisoners."[5]

What of those who will not be thunked? They become the institution's behaviour problems. They become society's delinquents. The "solitary confinement" of education is to ostracize the student. He becomes a dead issue. In the early school years, such a child might have been given a dosage of medication designed to "calm" him. This horrendous drugging of children whose energy does not flow in conformity with educational policy gives way to eventual labeling of adolescents as college-bound, general, vocational, dropout (depending upon the area of the country, the labels are different). The delinquent is labeled such and may wind up in the army if he's lucky or in cosmetology (hairdressing) is she's lucky. In any case, the student is made aware of his or her being different and often develops considerable animosity towards those who have been thunked into fitting into the "system." It ought to be significant to educators that usually the one sympathetic teacher both sexes of non-thunkees can relate to is the physical education instructor. When one thinks of such students as having a surplus of energy with no nourishing direction for it, it seems natural for them to seek those professionals who, in their own way, are concerned with providing physical directions for such energy.

We have decided to educate the rational rather than the whole person. It seems logical (I'm trapped with that word) to do this, since the one stable way people have to communicate with each other is by using the rational. It is the rational which provides our systems of law, government and human behaviour. If one should give emphasis to his irrational side, he becomes a target for exclusion. Some are excluded from jobs for being irrational, some are imprisoned for being irrational. We *fear* the irrational and irrational behaviour. Yet, allowing oneself to be aware of the flow of one's irrational parts provides the necessary balance which makes up the mature self. I would maintain that the rational man, the pure rhetoretician, the debater is not the mature person, but one who lives a puppet's life glued together by general semantics. This remark is not negatively directed at the field of semantics, but is made to point out the vital and missing ingredients of a mature self - namely, the energy flow which brings a human being into touch with his integrated (body-feelings-mind) person.

So now I am sitting in a university classroom - one of the 'lucky' ones. I can now be exposed to professors who will inform me about history, mathematics, philosophy, literature. I might learn how to analyse the marketing trends of business and how to figure accounts. I may learn how to fix up bodies which have become diseased or broken, how to prosecute and defend those coming into contact with my legal system of government. There is much more. I ought to be excited about being on the threshhold of experiencing what life and the wisdom of the ages has to offer me, but I'm not. I hate being here. I hate those pompous asses who stand before me and dictate to me as I wear out my writing hand taking notes. I hate being told to study a subject for months and months and perhaps years, only to take a series of examinations at the end of all that time to determine whether I have been able to master and regurgitate the data in order to lay claim to a degree that calls me educated. But, I have learned to give them what they want. I will study and give them back the data. I will sit in class.

But, my last act of defiance will be to openly show what the results of all the thunking has done to me. I am horizontal. I will not sit up. The concept of sitting straight is to be 'straight.' To be straight is to be dull, lame, clean, uncool, and all the rest of the words which describe Ortega's masses.[6] I won't get up. I'll never get up again. I won't stand on my feet or take a stand. I'll work for you and I'll hate you, but you'll never see my hate. I'll bury my true feelings (which is also to stop thinking) so don't try to get me to feel. If you try, I will fight you as hard as I can. I will marry and procreate and work and retire and die. You've won and I hate you. I'll allow myself this feeling and I'll keep it to myself. And although you have won, it's my hate that makes me feel alive. In later years, I'll release this feeling in many ways. I'll drink, I'll strike for more wages, I'll hoard, I'll seek kinds of play which are the opposite to what I was taught by school, parents and religion. And I guarantee I'll continue to hate what was done to me by education. And worst of all, I'll hate myself for giving up and giving education what it wanted in order to gain its rewards. The rewards are that I belong. I belong to a society of energy-starved, thunked humans who, no matter what political party or vocational hierarchy directs them, will do as they are told. It is too painful for me to be aware of all this at the core level, so I will cut off all feeling which is deep and authentic. I will act out in many different ways. I will withdraw under emotional stress. I will use spite instead of anger. I will use sex as a derivative of fear and anger. I will develop all kinds of ailments which are emotionally derived. In short, I will demonstrate to those arrogant enough to study me and label me within the context of behavioural science that in addition to holding energy in many directions as a result of early trauma, I now accept my thunking. You see, it's easier to belong to those millions of humans whose energy has been held down to the point of starvation. I feel this sense of comfort when I ride the subway (tube, metro) to work each day and experience the commonality of my own dullness, or listen to radio stations which all sound the same as I drive in long lines of stalled traffic each morning and evening. My comfort is in my defeat (because I am familiar with defeat) as I live on the edge of failure while still attending to milking the cows twice each day, seven days per week, 52 weeks per year - or - give in to the strip miners and sell my grazing lands and make money experiencing awful guilt while doing it.

And I who stand before those energetically starved students and surrender to the status quo who will not allow irrational learning, who will not allow experimentation with energy to release what is blocked and integrate that nourishment into the learning process, I too am a culprit. Because I have undergone the process of thunking and resisted, saying, 'No, I won't!' So in addition to feeling the pseudo-satisfaction that resistance brings, I feel the helplessness that my sense of valuelessness to my students and clients too often brings to my awareness. Yet, along with this feeling exists also the sense of my all-rightness, because sometimes I am of value. I know it, but more importantly, I feel it in my body's flow. It is this movement of my organism which keeps me, down through the years, curious, angry, frightened, sexual and loving. Learning to allow these feelings, I will not starve...

I believe there is a contribution to be made for introducing responsible energy dynamics into a humanistic curriculum...It is my hope that this paper has delineated one area of research seeking to offer a realistic learning environment for the 12 to 16 years of structured public education. I welcome additional data from those interested in similar research.

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A HUMANITARIAN IS ALWAYS A HYPOCRITE

by Terry Doran

These young people want to think of themselves as independent, mature, grown-up and rebellious but the truth is almost all of them would, as I put it in a recent talk to a class at the IU Campus in Ft. Wayne (located by the by-pass), "push a peanut down the by-pass if told to do so". And they just sit there. It doesn't matter what I say. I could jump up and down naked and the reaction when I leave would be the same. "Thank you for coming. We enjoyed your presentation".

College students in the Folk School are incapable of any sustained commitment or involvement. They work a day, sometimes a week, rarely any longer and disappear. If the work does not lead directly to a degree, they will not do it. Technology has made things too easy. The young are given visions without substance in books such as *The Greening of America, A Separate Reality, Jonathan Livingston Seagull* and others. When the young discover the harsh reality of living does not match such escapist visions, they become confused and disillusioned.

After all that, Robert Barr's question to me was, "Why can't you work within the system?" (Earlier, before this discussion got started, his question to me was: "You still got a school up there? Two of my students couldn't even find it." "That's interesting," I replied, "because I talked with both of them on the phone and one came to my office and talked to me for two hours.")

The questions of the students were not quite so inane but as usual they were aimed at points I wasn't really making. Most questions centered around, "How do the two schools differ?" One student asked me for a specific example and when I started telling the story of one of our students and how much he had gained from the Folk School (and The Folk School from him), Robert Barr interrupted with, "These personal vignettes are not important. We could sit around and swap these kinds of stories all night."

At this point another student asked me to further explain my claim of growing mediocrity among college students. Bracey, who had been silent up to now, asked if he could reply to that. He exclaimed, "It is because of my three years at Ed Psych classes that I'm checking out. I'm leaving at the end of the summer. All those kids are interested in is a degree, not learning". With this support to the enemy from one of his "own", Bob Barr walked out.

Another student asked Fred Boch for his personal reflections on The Alternative School. (I had spent some time discussing how The Folk School was for me a means of personal growth, a way to get back in touch with myself and discover some of those parts I had lost in school.) Fred's answer was simply, "My personal opinions don't belong here. I am a professional administrator. That's what I'm trained to do."

It is this kind of answer that reveals the terrible discrepancy between what these university "professional people' say and what they do, between their vision and their practice. At a conference I spoke at consisting entirely of professors, a well-intentioned professor prefaced a question to me with, "As a professional humanist..." and went on to speak about his concern to get in touch with "the real people." At yet another conference I heard professors and clergymen talk about "alienation and despair" and "joy and love" and "confusion and pain". Yet it is these men and woman, supposedly the intellectual leaders, these people with their sedate lives, afraid to take risks, hiding behind their degrees and titles, who have lost their way. Their degrees and certification, which they so desperately seek and need, become barriers to forming human relationships based on a common humanity. Their training - their education - gives them forms but no human substance. Without that their lives are nothing but rhetoric, empty and dull, sad and pathetic.

Do they, these Robert Barrs, these "professional humanists," these "professional administrators" really think caring can be certified and degreed? The answer, sadly, is yes. Or more precisely they have had to convince themselves it can in order to justify what they are doing. The university, the system, the alternatives within the system are to these professionals, then, not places to better establish justice, to better create honest and open dialogues and passionate confrontations, to better reconcile political attitudes and human responses, to better extend the visions of all concerned. No. They are none of these things to these professional educators. Rather, they are places these professional people can use to justify their own life-styles. In short, these professionals do what they do because of status and security, and material pleasures are more important to them than human concern and decency. George Orwell put it very simply and clearly, "We all live by robbing the Asiatic coolies and those of us who are enlightened all maintain that those coolies ought to be set free, but our standard of living and hence our enlightenment demands that the robbing shall continue. A humanitarian is always a hypocrite..."

At the end of the session that evening in Bloomington after repeated questions designed to avoid the real issue, I restated to the students what I considered the real issue to be.

"The issue is not between alternatives within and outside the public school system. The issue is much larger and far more important - the growing, creeping, corroding influence of the university over your lives, over all our lives - and how willing you are to give the university that control. You talk about how you are here because you are among the millions trapped in public schools. This kind of reasoning is what I call the MYTH OF INNOCENCE. You, the young, are good and innocent. It is the society and institutions that are evil and corrupt. So if you are so good, how come the institutions are so bad? You're not here because you're trapped. You're here for the same reason most of those other 'millions' are where they are. Because of a very simple and basic principle of human nature: THE LESS YOU DO THE MORE YOU ARE REWARDED.

You want a system that will make you happy all the time, where you don't have to exert any effort, any energy, any sacrifice, any risk. This kind of misguided expectation I call the TYRANNY OF JOY and it goes right along with the MYTH OF INNOCENCE. I see very few of you willing to make sacrifices, to take risks. You want to believe you are different from other generations but you're trading what humanity you have for dope, record albums, 10-speed bikes, tattered blue jeans, a trip to Europe and a college degree. Just like people from other generations.

So don't talk of changing systems and blaming all the ills of the world on the system. Talk about changing yourselves. The only tool you have for change is your own lives. It is the only tool anybody has. There is no system, no one way, no easy answer, no magic formula. It is not easy but there is no other way I know of putting our visions and rhetoric in touch with what we do in our lives. And if we don't do that, it is not changes. It is deception.

Not one person challenged me.

Terry Doran was the Founder - Director of the Ft. Wayne Folk School in Illinois at the time he wrote this piece. It is reprinted from *The New Schools Exchange Newsletter* for June 15, 1973.

CHILDREN AT RISK
by Jonathan Kozol

A litany of plague statistics documents the decimation of the spirits of poor children. The number of homeless children has increased 800 percent since 1980. For black children under six, the poverty rate has jumped to 49 percent. Infant death rates for poor children in the South Bronx of New York are four times the rate for wealthy children on the East Side of Manhattan. Black children are three times as likely to be classified "retarded" by the public schools as whites, while black teenagers read four years behind the level of white classmates.

The litany is getting tiresome because it speaks of symptoms and not causes. One set of statistics heard less often may, for this reason, be a great deal more important. It is that body of too rarely cited data which alerts us to the differences in public education funding for the children of the very rich and the very poor: differences, moreover, which have grown at an unprecedented rate in recent years.

In 1980, the wealthiest school districts in New Jersey spent $800 more per child than the poorest districts. Today they spend $3,000 more. In Texas, in 1978, the richest districts spent $600 more than the poor districts. Today they spend up to $5,000 more. Though affluent districts like to argue that their fiscal edge does not automatically equate with better education, the ferocity with which the fight against all equalizing efforts makes it very clear that they know well what they are getting for their money.

Given these realities, any notion that the rich and poor compete for opportunity upon a level field rings hollow indeed. The price is paid by children whom we term 'at risk' but whom, in fact we*place* at risk by policies that deny them equal opportunity

In the fall of 1989, President Bush and 50 governors gathered at Monticello for an 'education summit.' They spoke, in the accepted jargon of the decade, of 'restructuring' the public schools and they churned out documents about the need to render public education 'more competitive.' But the root of the problem - the growing gap in educational resources rich and poor kids receive was not addressed: not one of the 50 governors dared even once to speak of inequality or segregation.

Twenty-two years after the death of Martin Luther King, schools are more unequal and more segregated than in 1968. In every major city, underfunded all-black schools that bear his name stand in squalid mockery of his ideals.

Unequal educational provision for our children sends a message of contempt to many poor black children, one that soon turns to self-despisal. A thousand desperate pathologies - drugs and violence and early pregnancies and headlong flights into self-ruinous behavior - are the natural results.

What can be done? In many cases, energetic individuals like Anna Dickerson of Chicago have improved their children's poverty-stricken schools. But a few inspiring success stories won't solve a systemic problem. Broader remedial and bilingual education programs can help, as can programs aimed toward increased parental involvement (if they also help parents who themselves are educationally or socially disadvantaged). Whatever the approach, for changes to be effective they must reflect a genuine commitment to provide the same level of resources to all of our children - rich and poor alike.

When such a commitment is made, 'at risk' children thrive. Consider this: on any given day in Massachusetts, 200 black children from the Boston slums ride the bus to go to school in the suburban town of Lexington. They begin in kindergarten and, although they are provided with a lot of counseling, their education is the same as that which is afforded to their affluent white classmates. Virtually every non-white child bused to Lexington from Boston finishes 12 years of school and graduates; most go to four-year colleges. Low-income black children of the same abilities, consigned to public school in Boston, have at best a 24 percent chance of the same success.

Suburban parents care about poor children. They would like to see them helped. However, they can't expect the problem to be solved by somebody else at a good safe distance. There are ways to help 'at-risk' children and ultimately end the 'dual society.' The answers exist. They are costly, but they are also clear and in many ways self-evident.

Jonathan Kozol is the author of *Death at an Early Age, Free Schools, The Night is Dark and I Am Far From Home,* and now *Rachel and Her Children: Homeless Families in America,* winner of the Robert F. Kennedy Book Award for 1989. A review of the latter book appears below.

Out-of-doors as 'school'

THE PULSE OF LEARNING

by Richard Lewis

IT WAS ONE of those warm summer evenings. I was on my way home when, just at the entrance of the park where I had been sitting, I saw three small children chasing fireflies. I would have kept on walking, since it was getting late, but I lingered for a moment to watch them. The children seemed to be completely involved with what they were doing: the sweep of their arms as they thought they had closed their hands on a firefly's humming light; their bodies arching forward when what escaped them suddenly appeared a few feet away; their excited whispers sifting quietly around us. Then quite unexpectedly, one of the children, sure that she had caught a firefly, came running to her father nearby—and opening her hand, proudly showed him what was inside. Both she and her father looked, but there was nothing there except her bare hand. No matter, off she quickly went back to her friends, dizzying themselves in their leaps and hoverings, trying to find out what it must feel like to have such particles of light so close to them.

A moment, perhaps - but the knowing of it, the poetry within it, wasn't about to leave me. I was touched by the way the children were so totally absorbed. For the briefest time they seemed to be an example of something being learned in which no part was absent. Everything - the senses, the mind, and the feelings - were in some balanced state of concentration; and to separate these elements would have been to take from these children a perfectly natural way to discover what they had not known before. The unity of this triad is the essential ground for this kind of learning - a learning which seems to be most evident when children play. I keep trying to discover how this sort of learning can be a recognized and cultivated part of education. Not an easy task, since so much of education today is more intent on separating our learning capacities than in bringing them together.

How stifling it is for so many children in our schools to find out somewhere after kindergarten (in some cases before) that the prerequisites of getting ahead as a learner in school is to divide play from work, imagination from fact, feeling from truth. How confusing it must be for children to be told that their senses (hence their bodies) are not where they learn, and that real learning takes place only in the citadels of their intellects.

What unfortunately soon begins to seem true to the majority of children is that to succeed in school it is best to become a passive learner - as opposed to an active learner. One must not invent or discover, but imitate and acknowledge. One must not question and doubt, but accept and obey. Such a contract with passivity has spawned an educational dilemma that most educators are hard put to solve: how to relieve the contagious boredom affecting so many children (as well as teachers) once learning has been separated from the taproots of curiosity and imagination, from the sources of learning in which children think and feel, as well as play and work without having to subdivide these human capacities into scheduled and isolated periods of a day.

With our emphasis on scholastic learning, I believe we have denied what children already know about learning - not as an intellectual definition, but as an intuitive understanding of their own world. For most children, the instinct to learn, actively and enthusiastically, is most evident in their earliest years when they first begin to walk and talk - and as importantly, to play. What happens, if a supportive human bonding is reasonably intact, is the development of children's natural desire to learn - to move with their own internal impulses to understand and to survive in the world evolving around and within them. These impulses - and these learnings - are not 'schooled' as much as instinctual; they emanate from children, precisely because they are crucial to their existence, not just physically, but as a consciousness becoming aware of itself. In other words, a sense of inner and outer, of thought and feeling, of body and self, in some extraordinary fashion are working together through children; so that, just as a seed begins to assume the form of a tree, they begin to assume the form of their human aliveness.

THE IMPORTANT QUESTION is how we might bring this instinctual learning into schooling. What can be done to instill learning once again as an active - even passionate - concern? How to unite the broken triad? Perhaps for clues we have to go back to some of the qualities of our own earliest learnings - to the time, just as with those children chasing fireflies, when our learnings were somehow our hands and feet, indeed the entire experience of our bodies, sensorially probing the world around us. We have to find those moments that were never defined as learning - but their meanings are still with us: the time we walked in the snow and listened intently to our footsteps, or the time we fell down in the ocean and couldn't catch our breath. We have to remember that our learning, when we were very young, was not linear - it is a learning, as the novelist Eudora Welty noted in *One Writer's Beginning*, that "stamps you with its moments. . . . It isn't steady. It's a pulse."

Because the boundaries of our learning had not been constructed for us as yet, everything was to be listened to - taken in, so to speak - in the safekeeping of our awareness: knowledge was not a subject matter broken into unconnected thoughts, our imagination was not different from reality, and play was the work we knew best. We were sensory beings related to the languages of our ideas and feelings. We knew something simply by the way we felt about it.

And it was the strength of our feelings which allowed us to empathize with so much around us. When we listened to stories, we became the wind and the sun and the serpents and the heroes. We could believe with Katherine, a six-year-old child, when she wrote: "Long, long ago people could see and feel the stars and sky because the sky was down so that people could touch and feel it."

Katherine might be telling us that the truth is that children - like ourselves - learn most deeply and personally when thought is joined with feelings and they experience the totality of their bodies responding to ideas. Thoreau suggested the importance of how 'thoughts must live with and be inspired with the life of the body.' (1) In a similar vein, it was Emily Dickinson who said:

> If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry. These are the only ways I know it. Is there any other way? (2)

Indeed, it is Dickinson's question which prompts me to reply that what is crucial to learning is to see it as poetic - that is, we must restore to learning the artistry within it. We must bring back to teaching the deepest respect for the art that is teaching, as well as the recognition that the artistic act, when it succeeds, incorporates the very triad of learning we are speaking of, so that mind, body and feeling are one entity. In his book *The Aims of Education*, Alfred North Whitehead, the philosopher and mathematician, stresses the need to make this triad of learning paramount to education:

> You must not divide the seamless coat of learning. What education has to impart is an intimate sense for the power of ideas for the beauty of ideas, and for the structure of ideas, together with a particular body of knowledge which has peculiar reference to the life of the being possessing it. (3)

We must, as Whitehead states, become more aware of the 'life' of the learner - aware that even one's 'thoughts' and 'ideas' are themselves manifestations of this life, and pulsate, as do all living things, within the fluidity of the entire body, known to us as *the human being*. I cannot help noticing that even the descriptive phrase *human being* is in itself active, and intimates *that which moves*. For us to capitalize on this possibility simply means that the exchange, as well as the making, of our ideas and thoughts, can be a bringing together of all that is alive in ourselves and others, so that our feelings, our minds, and our bodies are no less than a personal integration through which the expression of life moves.

I WONDER NOW whether the children are still chasing those fireflies in the park? A number of days and nights have passed since I saw them - and I suppose they have found some new fascinations. Yet I am quite sure that somewhere in the memories of these three children, the pale phosphorescent glow of lights, which darted mysteriously away as the children tried to catch them, are still moving. I am quite sure that in each of these children something new has begun - and continues - and fills them with the excitement and pleasure of what there is to know. The shadows of their enlivened spirits - the poetry of their knowing - tells us much about how we might learn, with them.

FOOTNOTES:

1. H.D. Thoreau, *The Mind As Nature*, New York: Harper & Row, 1962, p. 59.
2. Emily Dickinson, *Selected Letters*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971, p. 208.
3. Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education*, New York: Macmillan, 1929, p. 23.

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THE ART OF DOING NOTHING
by Hanna Greenberg

"Where do you work?"

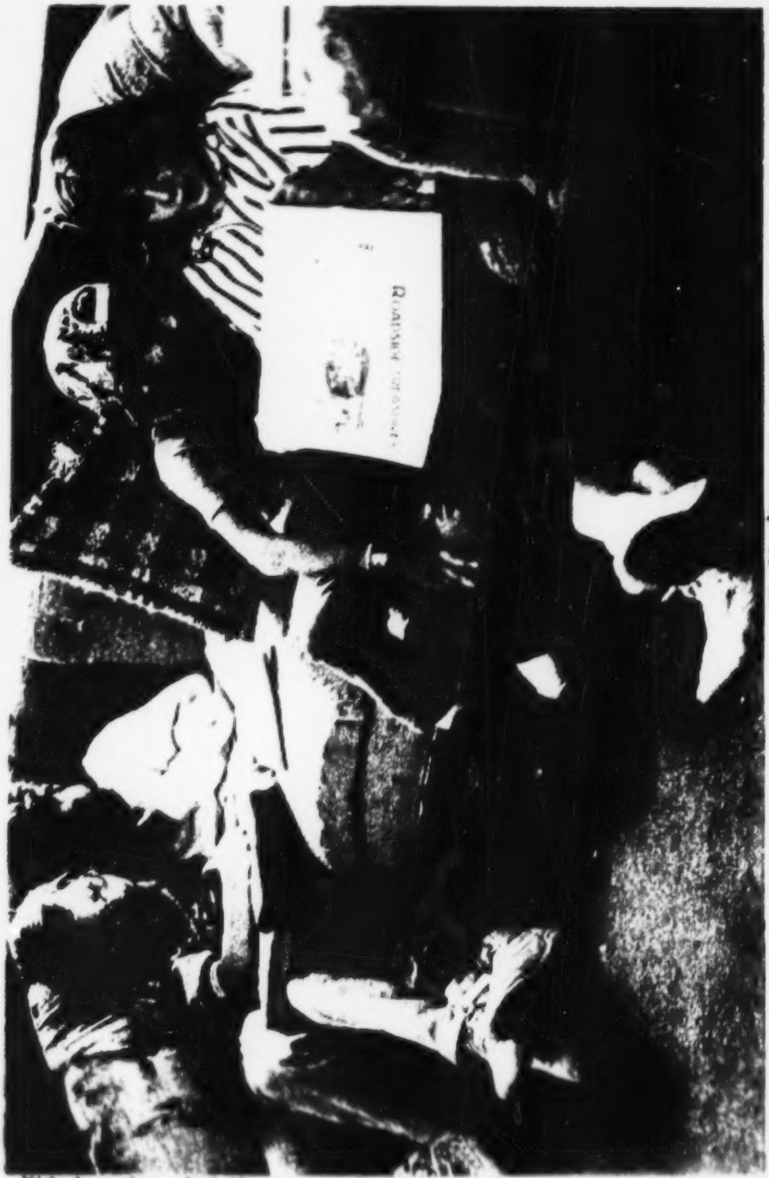
"At Sudbury Valley School."

"What do you do?"

"Nothing."

Doing nothing at Sudbury Valley School requires a great deal of energy and discipline, and many years of experience. I get better at it every year, and it causes me to see how I and others struggle with the inner conflict that arises within us inevitably. The conflict is between wanting to do things for people, to impart your knowledge and to pass on your hard earned wisdom, and the realization that the children have to do their learning under their own steam and at their own pace. Their use of us is dictated by their wishes, not ours. We have to be there when asked, not when we decide we should be.

Teaching, inspiring, and giving advice are all natural activities that adults of all cultures and places seem to engage in around children. Without these activities, each generation would have to invent everything anew, from the wheel to the ten commandments, metal working to farming. Man passes his knowledge to the young from generation to generation, at home, in the community, at the workplace -- and, supposedly, at school. Unfortunately, the more today's schools endeavor to give individual students guidance, the more they harm the children. This statement requires explanation, since it seems to contradict what I have just said, namely, that adults always help children



Kids learning what *they* see as important - photo by Dave Brickman

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learn how to enter the world and become useful in it. What I have learned, very slowly and painfully over the years, is that children make vital decisions for themselves in ways no adults could have anticipated or even imagined.

Consider the simple fact that at SVS, many students have decided to tackle algebra not because they need to know it, or even find it interesting, but because it is hard for them, it's boring, and they are bad at it. They need to overcome their fear, their feeling of inadequacy, their lack of discipline. Time and again, students who have made this decision achieve their stated goal and take a huge step in building their egos, their confidence, and their character. So why does this not happen when all children are required or encouraged to take algebra in high school? The answer is simple. To overcome a psychological hurdle one has to be ready to make a personal commitment. Such a state of mind is reached only after intense contemplation and self analysis, and cannot be prescribed by others, nor can it be created for a group. In every case it is an individual struggle, and when it succeeds it is an individual triumph. Teachers can only help when asked, and their contribution to the process is slight compared to the work that the student does.

The case of algebra is easy to grasp but not quite as revealing as two examples that came to light at recent thesis defenses. One person to whom I have been very close, and whom I could easily have deluded myself into thinking that I had "guided" truly shocked me when, contrary to my "wisdom," she found it more useful to use her time at school to concentrate on socializing and organizing dances than to hone the writing skills that she would need for her chosen career as a journalist. It would not have occurred to any of the adults involved with this particular student's education to advise or suggest the course of action that she wisely charted for herself, guided only by inner knowledge and instinct. She had problems which first she realized and then she proceeded to solve in creative and personal ways. By dealing with people directly rather than observing them from the sidelines, she learned more about them and consequently achieved greater depth and insights, which in turn led to improved writing. Would writing exercises in English class have achieved that better for her? I doubt it.

Or what about the person who loved to read, and lost that love after a while at SVS? For a long time she felt that she had lost her ambition, her intellect, and her love of learning because all she did was play outdoors. After many years she realized that she had buried herself in books as an escape from facing the outside world. Only after she was able to overcome her social problem, and only after she learned to enjoy the outdoors and physical activities did she return to her beloved books. Now they are not an escape, but a window to knowledge and new experience. Would I or any other teacher have known how to guide her as wisely as she had guided herself? I don't think so.

As I was writing this another example from many years ago came to mind. It illustrates how the usual sort of positive encouragement and enrichment can be counterproductive and highly limiting. The student in question was obviously intelligent, diligent and studious. Early on, any test would have shown that he had a marked talent in mathematics. What he actually did for most of his ten years at SVS was play sports, read literature, and later on in his teens, play classical music on the piano. He studied algebra mostly on his own but seemed to have devoted only a little of his time to mathematics. Now, at the age of twenty-four, he is a graduate student in abstract mathematics and doing extremely well at one of the finest universities. I shudder to think what would have happened to him had we "helped" him during his years to accumulate more knowledge of math, at the expense of the activities he chose to prefer. Would he have had the inner strength, as a little boy, to withstand our praise and flattery and stick to his guns and read books, fool around with sports and play music? Or would he have opted for being an "excellent student" in math and science and grown up with his quest for knowledge in other fields unfulfilled? Or would he have tried to do it all? And at what cost?

As a counterpoint to the previous example I would like to cite another case which illustrates yet another aspect of our approach. A few years ago a young girl who had been a student st SVS since she was five told me quite angrily that she had wasted two years and learned nothing. I did not agree with her assessment of herself, but I did not feel like arguing with her, so I just said, "If you learned how bad it is to waste time, why then you could not have learned a better lesson so early in life, a lesson that will be of value for the rest of your days." That reply calmed her, and I believe it is a good illustration of the value of allowing young people to make mistakes and learn from them, rather than directing their lives in an effort to avoid mistakes.

Why not let each person make their own decisions about their use of their own time? This would increase the likelihood of people growing up fulfilling their own unique educational needs without being confused by us adults who could never know enough or be wise enough to advise them properly.

So I am teaching myself to do nothing, and the more I am able to do it, the better is my work. Please don't draw the conclusion that the staff is superfluous. You might say to yourself that the children almost run the school themselves, so why have so many staff, just to sit around and do nothing. The truth is that the school and the students need us. We are there to watch and nurture the school as an institution and the students and individuals.

The process of self direction, or blazing your own way, indeed of living your own life rather than passing your time, is natural but not self evident to children growing up in our civilization. To reach that state of mind they need an environment that is like a family, on a larger scale than the nuclear family, but nonetheless supportive and safe. The staff, by being attentive and caring and at the same time not directive and coercive, gives the children the courage and the impetus to listen to their own inner selves. They know that we are competent as any adult to guide them, but our refusal to do so is a pedagogical tool actively used to teach them to listen only to themselves and not to others who, at best, know only half the facts about them.

Our abstaining from telling students what to do is not perceived by them as a lack of something, an emptiness. Rather it is the impetus for them to forge their own way not under our guidance but under our caring and supportive concern. For it takes work and courage to do what they do for and by themselves. It cannot be done in a vacuum of isolation, but thrives in a vital and complex community which the staff stabilizes and perpetuates.

Hanna Greenberg, along with her husband Dan and some others is a founder of Sudbury School in Framingham, Massachusetts, and a long-time teacher and parent there.

AN EDUCATION MONEY CAN'T BUY

by Gene Lehman

Money can buy a school system, but it cannot buy an education. Traditional education is in a state of continuing crisis because of the increasing amount of time, energy, resources and manipulation needed to maintain school systems.

School administrations tend to blame taxpayers for being too stingy or for not caring about education. They keep looking for government solutions even though the governmental process, much like school systems, is a victim of success. As more and more previously discounted groups become better educated and become a significant political force, the ability of schools and government to arrive at an enforceable consensus breaks down. Schools and government can no longer rule by manipulation and compromise.

We have reached such a state of crisis partly through self-protecting, irresponsible leadership, partly through the public's willingness to act helpless and blindly follow this leadership, and finally through the inexorable law of diminishing tax returns.

Our school systems, really an extension of government, have met the problem of financing expanded operations and rising costs through higher taxes, new taxes, and manipulation of the taxing process. There is a point, not precisely definable but becoming more and more apparent, at which higher taxes bring in less money, simply because productivity becomes over-taxed. It's the old story of killing the goose that lays the golden egg.

Perhaps because our business and political leaders are so much a product of our educational system, government and business operations at the very highest levels are being overruled by the law of diminishing returns. Businesses can generate more income by raising prices, but only up to a point. They can evade the point of diminishing returns by borrowing, advertising, salesmanship, product manipulation, monopolistic practices and tariff protection, but only up to a point. The longer businesses evade competitive productivity the greater the inevitable crash.

School systems, like so many businesses, have for too long evaded competition and neglected productivity. Even the concepts of productivity, open competition, or educational efficiency seem to be unintelligible to the educators in control of our school systems.

True learning comes about by facing the challenge of reality, by taking personal responsibility and by discovering truth through experience. Most school systems work in just the opposite direction. Truth is determined by some charismatic leader (often far back in a forgotten history) or by some compromising committee. It is passed down through a bureaucratic system. It is standardized, institutionalized, dogmatized, actively enforced and passively accepted.

Those who try to discover the truth about school financing will likely become hopelessly discombobulated, especially if they try to figure out why we have such a system for financing education.

School systems will continue struggling along from levy to levy. There will be cuts in staff, programs and facilities, but always limited by a higher regulatory power systematically applied. The ultimate weapon, school closure, will continue being used mostly as a threat. Parents and public cannot face the prospect of uncontrolled hoards of students suddenly released from school. School systems dare not stay closed long lest the public seriously consider or even temporarily implement alternative programs that could get out of control.

Businesses are finding it profitable to participate much more directly in education, which is the biggest business of all. Even without the stimulation of tax credits or a voucher system, entrepreneurs will find the field of education very challenging. Some will contract out special programs to school systems on a guaranteed performance basis. Some will establish open learning centers that put full emphasis on efficient learning. Some will use the latest communication technology to break through all barriers that presently control students and limit access to the best methods, material and instructors.

About 90% of what most schools do can be done more efficiently by computerized technology. As school systems implement technological solutions to problems of learning and behavior, the art of teaching may become more and more irrelevant.

Whether the quality of education will improve or deteriorate will depend largely on the individual response of school systems, parents and students.

New frontiers of learning are open to those who can break free from restrictive institutions and traditions, to those who relish the risks in challenging the future.

Gene Lehman is the originator, author and distributor of ***LUNO***, the Learning Network Unlimited of Oregon.

MOVEMENT IN EDUCATION
by David Boadella

I have been asked to talk about my views on movement, and on how they can be applied in the school situation. Well, I want to say at the beginning that I think the whole subject of 'movement' is a very big one. It is much more than just a subject that we try to make time for, amongst lots of other subjects in the school curriculum. It is not so long since the time when P.T. - physical training - was seen as something to fill up the odd corner of the day with, and a way of ensuring 'good discipline.'

So even in terms purely of school curriculum - which is a very restricted field - we are confronted with a fundamental choice: do we want to manipulate people, or do we want to educate them? 'Educare' means to draw out, to encourage someone to move towards their environment and to explore it. In the Rudolf Laban approach to physical education we have this term, much in vogue with modern P.E. teachers, 'exploring space.' Well, exploring space is something we begin from the moment we are born, and it does not end until we are dead. That is why movement is a very big subject.

Consider a newborn child: it does not have language, or concepts. It cannot read, write, or do higher mathematics. But it can move. Even before birth it can kick in the womb. So a child comes into the world bringing with it a highly developed energy system which is expressed in the early days entirely through movements. When a baby moves its limbs, and expresses itself through a whole intricate range of rhythms, do we call that "physical education"? You see, the theme of movement is a very basic theme which is much more fundamental than what we usually put in the box labelled "physical education."

Well, what other kinds of education are there, and how does movement relate to them? Take for a moment a highly abstract subject like mathematics or logic. Here we would appear to be at the other end of the spectrum which ranges from the *physical* end of things to the *higher* intellectual pursuits. It is all part of the set of cultural values that teaches us that mind is in some sense more important than the body, whereas I prefer to think in terms of a total organism in which this artificial separation has no place.

Well, to return to mathematics, and to scientific reasoning - it was Jean Piaget who devoted his life work to studies that showed that children's thinking, everybody's thinking, is built up on a basis of *physical* exploration. In order to add two and two effectively, if you are an infant, you *need to move* two objects next to two other objects. Addition in fact is a particular kind of movement - a putting together. Now what happened in the days when the value of *activity* in education had not been realized was that teachers tried to teach concepts through words. A child learned to parrot tables, or to follow a set of rules, but this led to no true understanding of numbers - he was not really thinking.

Movement then has a deep relationship to thinking. Some biologists have carried out a set of intelligence tests on two identical sets of rats: those who had been free to explore their environment from birth, and those whose exploratory movements had been deliberately restricted. The former group showed much brighter responses. So if people are to grow up able to handle their environment, they need literally to be able to handle it, to touch it, to move bits of it around, and to experience themselves moving in relationship to it.

Before I leave the question of the relation of movement to thinking, I should like to mention one other example from a high-flying intellectual realm: a game of chess. Chess is a form of reasoning combined with imagination and intuition in which the abstract intellectual process is worked out in the form of *moves*. Occasionally in the past, on certain court occasions, there took place what was called *living chess* in which the moves were made by real people on a lifesize board - you then have a clear-cut movement experience. But of course in conventional chess you move pieces. The point is that the whole logical sequence is fundamentally rooted in the idea of consecutive *moves*. A child when he is learning chess needs to go through the process of actually testing out the consequences of his thinking by making a set of moves on the board to see if they work. If not, he is encouraged to unmake them, and to make a different set. With experience of *moving* in this way, he eventually learns to visualize the consequences of a certain logic, and to make the moves in his imagination. Very gifted players play blindfold chess, in which there are no pieces, no boards, no *moves*. All are imagined, and only words pass between them, words which stand as symbols for the move they would otherwise have made.

And this is the kind of way in which I see the relation between movement and the intellectual pursuits. Thinking is fantasy-movement - what would happen if...? You notice I am not yet talking about what we should put into a school. I am exploring the importance of movement as a phenomenon, and its relation to broad areas of education. What about the emotions, for example, the whole question of what people feel? Well, the word 'emotion' means, literally, to *move out*. Feeling something is to do with being moved by it. Whereas in exploratory movements we move a part of the environment, in emotional states we are moved by it in this special sense. We can be moved by it in any number of directions: it may make us sad, it may fill with joy, it may make us feel like burning the place down. But all emotions are fundamentally expressed by movements. I don't know how many of you have ever seen a brilliant little book by Darwin which is called *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. It has some marvelous descriptions of different feeling states, accompanied by pictures of the expressive facial movements that go with them.

So movement education in the sense that I am using it, which is a very broad sense, has much to do with our attitude to other people's emotions, particularly children's emotions. We might ask ourselves why it is that children are in general much freer in the expression of their emotions than adults. Is this a good or a bad thing? What happens between infancy and adulthood to cut down on the expression of feeling? How do we respond to a child who cries, who gets angry? How important is it to provide situations where the child is really excited about what he is learning and moves towards it eagerly?

I now want to introduce you to the idea that there are two fundamentally different reactions to living movements. There are those who seek to control them, to condition them and to manipulate them, and there are those who seek to nourish the impulses to expression and exploration within people. In every field of education we have this choice. Are schools the training ground in which we prepare the human material that *we* have decided to shape, or are they environments into which we put as great a variety of experiences as possible which the child can use in the process of his development? Do we set out with a set of fixed movements we want to teach during physical education, a fixed set of stock responses to poetry and art that we want to elicit, a fixed code of behavior we want to instill and a pre-digested block of knowledge we want him to digest? Or are we interested in where the child *is*, in what motivates him, in where his creativity lies, in what he has to say about his environment?

The question of manipulation and conditioning versus spontaneity and creativity is a vast social question. It could take us into the whole question of dictatorship and democracy, into bureaucratic forms of control and the protest against these. But I want to talk for a moment about the disturbed child. Some years ago, in Nottingham (England), I worked with disturbed children. They were maladjusted children in the backward class of an ordinary school. Not only were they backward, but they had emotional and social problems. There were a variety of neurotic and delinquent behavior patterns. Moreover, they had severe *movement disturbances*. I remember one boy called Billie who was so withdrawn and inhibited that he was terrified simply to move around freely in a large space. He could only navigate around the hall by hanging onto some section of the wall. Other children have such explosive energies that they knock all the furniture over. Why were these children like that? Did they inherit it? Do we agree with those psychologists who tell us it is all a matter of different temperaments, or do the ways in which people move, their total bodily expression, reflect the way in which they were treated by the environment?

A strange thing happened in this school. One or two of the children were so disturbed that I recommended them for child guidance treatment. There is a technique called 'play therapy' by means of which it is possible to help children work through some of the tension areas which lead to personality problems - they work through it by various forms of structured movements. But I was afraid in this area, all the child guidance clinic had to offer was 'remedial exercises in English ' - this for a boy who was full to the teeth with pent-up violence! So the question has to be raised - it is part of the teacher's job to help children whose disturbed personality can be read in their movement patterns?

In this same class I had a child who was désperately eager to go out on the yard at playtime, because he wanted to beat up another child. He was nursing some grievance, and violence was sure to be done. So I kept him behind and gave him the opportunity to unleash his fury on an improvised punching bag - an old wallpaper book. He hammered at this until his knuckles were almost raw, and at the end his previously sullen and vicious face was wreathed in smiles. "I think I'll be all right to go out to play now," he said, breathing much more easily.

Violence and destructiveness are not natural human tendencies. They arise when fundamental impulses are blocked. Of course some frustrations are inevitable in the process of growing up. The important thing is whether the child learns that his *right to feel* is under attack. There are so many ways in which standard methods of upbringing lead people to curb their expressive movements, to damp down the fires of their own vitality. The process of conditioning and manipulation, of *controlling* other people, is still endemic in many areas. This is what the generation gap is all about.

According to Erich Fromm, destructiveness can be defined as unlived life. One of the most violent places on earth is a prison, a place where movements are severely confined or proscribed. Sadly, all too many children are assigned to schools which almost equally severely limit their freedom of movement! It is understandable that this kind of feeling could lead to a destructive, cynical response, and that such a child could equate such a school with a prison sentence, experiencing his education as a *blockage to growth*. Growth itself is a continuous, slow, expansive movement. We all know the power of growth - how a small plant can crack a paving stone. Now, in terms of education, we have to ask what that plant is doing under the paving stone in the first place! Why do we build on top of people: concepts, theories, modes of behavior? The word in ancient Egyptian for "education" was the same as the word "to punish." Well, punishment, and its twin - reward - have been the driving forces in education almost up to the present day.

If education means growth, the best kind of growth, you have to provide certain conditions - the space, the nourishment, etc. - but you cannot produce growth to order; you cannot specify the finished shape; the firmer you make the mould, the sooner the ossification sets in. Where we provide real opportunities for growth, where education is focused on individual needs and personal interests, I have yet to meet a child who has not some area in which he can excel. Creativity is not the privilege of the few; it is the birthright of everybody. And this leads me on to describe some of the ways in which I think movement can help to foster creativity and growth.

I want to make a distinction initially between therapeutic movement and educational movement, though the distinction is at best arbitrary. The aim of any therapeutic or remedial program is to cure some form of disturbance, to put right something that has gone wrong. The aim of educational programs is to draw out of the child and to potentialize the many human talents that he is capable of. But the borderline between the two realms is a hazy one. When I was working in Nottingham as a teacher, I was doing teacher, I was doing work that was therapeutic in its effects. Many of the develop-ments in therapeutic groups have led to a broad educational phenomenon called the 'human potential movement.' I think we have always to bear in mind that the entity 'school' is an arbitrary one. We must be careful of dividing off what goes on within its four walls from what goes on outside them. One of the best ways of looking at activities within a school is to ask the question, will the children ever choose to pursue any of these activities *outside* the school? If not, I think we have to question quite seriously what we are doing - and why.

So let us look for a moment at the role of movement in the therapeutic sense. Even if it does not, usually, happen in school, it certainly concerns children. In 1966, at Senate House London, the Laban Art or Movement studio put on a three day course which was called 'Movement as therapy'. It was the first tentative venture of that versatile group into the area of therapy. This was followed four years later by a conference in Edinburgh that was concerned with 'Communication without words'. People from therapeutic and from educational disciplines took part.

One of the first papers given there was on the treatment of autistic children. Now it is true that you are rather unlikely to meet the severe problems of the autistic child in the ordinary school. But he demonstrates in a particularly clear way. The state of being of someone whose movement impulses are radically blocked, and from an early age. These children are usually intensely withdrawn, they have a lot of latent but unexpressed anger, and very often the block on motility is sufficiently severe to have arrested speech. Psychologists are divided about them. Some believe that this is an inborn condition due to some neurological defect. But there is a body of evidence accumulating to show that these are children who were *turned off* by their environment. Something emotionally crippling happened in early infancy which stopped them wanting to reach out and to communicate with their environment. Since they do not communicate through words, conventional methods of teaching or of psychological treatment are difficult to apply. But recently a number of different approaches to this severe problem have been made through movement therapy, and through movement education.

I am going to describe something of this approach to you. It has proved capable of restoring speech, and improving the motor functions and power to communicate of autistic children. It has also proved to be a basic method of working with people who have any kind of emotional problem. It is axiomatic in this approach that emotional disturbance always registers in a movement disturbance.

All this work I have been describing involves very fundamental areas of movement. I would like to call this the level of the *involuntary* movement responses. We do not really choose our emotions, you know. When you fall in love, or become anxious, or are made to feel furious about something, you are moved from within by a very powerful energy. What you have control over is the bodily expression of this emotion. Unfortunately people learn, very often, to control not only the outward acting-out of strong emotions, they turn against the emotions themselves. And the end product of this is a life which is lived more from the head than from the heart. A.S. Neill called one of his books 'Hearts, not heads in the school' - a provocative title, but one that suggests that it is easy for educators to get their priorities wrong.

Let me suggest that the fundamental choice facing us in education is one between spontaneity and conditioning.

There is basically a choice between *spontaneity*, creativity, as a source of action; and *conditioning*. Let me try to make the distinction clear by dwelling a little longer on the two contrasted situations in schools. The keynote of any go-ahead progressive primary school today (and I single primary schools out here deliberately, because I think the school today is orientated around the children's inner needs: emotional, intellectual, physical) is pleasure. It has been recognized at last that children learn best what they need to learn, and what they need to learn is what satisfies them, and nourishes them. So the progressive primary school is orientated around *pleasure;* it is geared to offering and encouraging *pleasurable activities*. Children are led to explore their environment at first hand, that is by discovery methods where creative thinking and insight are at a premium. They also explore on their own with their hearts - with inner resources - and learn to find themselves as persons, through such media as dramatic work, creative writing, group music-making, painting and modelling etc. Anyone engaged on work of this kind with children soon learns to trust the child, and to trust human nature. Without this trust, without the confidence in the creative potential of children, and the patience to wait for this to unfold, this kind of education would not be possible.

I won't have much to say about the contrasted method of education: it is associated with dislike of school, anxiety in the presence of teachers, the possibility of punishment, results, learning to repeat what is in the textbook, and so on. I am not concerned here with whether exams are a good or a bad thing. I am concerned with the means of getting there, and whether they are good or not. One of the cardinal principles established by the then Ministry of Education, through its Inspectorate, was that education should be suited to the child's current stage of development, it should not always be a preparation for the next stage. To put it simply, if we teach nature study to infants, it is because infants are interested in the world around them, and are better people if they use their senses to explore it, NOT because the university would like more science graduates, or the government more technicians.

Contrasted Viewpoints

In terms of physical education, this means that one wants to make the movement experiences as far as possible situations that children will enjoy in their own right. They must be helped to develop kinaesthetic pleasure from the aware use of their own bodies. This was where Rudolf Laban came along to produce a quiet revolution in movement education in Britain, because his focus was on encouraging greater and greater degrees of self-awareness and sensitivity to fine nuances of movement, and his ideas lend themselves to a free, but controlled use of the body.

I should like to talk for a little about how I see this Laban movement work. What he provides is a kind of vocabulary of movement. After all, if movement is a form of communication, then you can have movement sentences. I like to see the various categories of movement description that Laban uses as resembling the forms of grammar: there are, basically, nouns and adjectives, verbs, prepositions and adverbs.

The noun and the adjective together give you a description of a body shape. Think of all the immense varieties of human posture, think of all the attitudes they can express, the degrees of tension and relaxation, strong positions, twisted shapes, the nuances of the human stance. Think of all those colloquial expressions: the hang-dog look, lhe stiff upper lip, a man who digs his heels in, he had no stomach for it, put your back into it, take it on the chin, and any number more. All these indicate both a typical posture and certain character attitudes.

In Laban movement work the posture of the body and its muscular expression says something about WHO one is. This is also of course the foundation of dramatic expression since the first thing an actor has to learn to do is to feel himself into the bodily and kinaesthetic state of being of the character he is trying to portray.

Well after the nouns and adjectives we have the verbs. After the who, the *what*. What do people do with their bodies when they move them? Laban tended to divide action movements into two groups - *locomotory*, those that take you from place to place, and *gestures*, where the body may stay in one area of space, but the upper part particularly, the arms, eyes and face, are used to express a meaning. What Laban was trying to do in his physical education work was to extend the range of movement capacities in people. He found that people were usually very restricted in their movements. Their bodies limited them. And his aim was to extend these limits.

Then one can think about the prepositions of movement: up, down, in, out, to, from, with, without, back, forward. These define one's orientation in space. It is interesting to reflect on the development of locomotory movements in animals:-

The very earliest animals, protozoa, one-celled creatures, had no heads and no tails. Their movement was confined to one dimension: basically they could flow in or they could flow out. (It is interesting to record in passing that the word exploration means literally, to flow out). Or if you like to use Laban terms, they could open and they could close. With the development of the body-shape to the stage of the worm, there is a clearly defined head end and tail end. Movement forwards and backwards in a clear sense now becomes possible.

Finally, with the attainment of verticality and the upright posture in the higher primates, the directions up and down have a much fuller meaning. There is a whole literature on this dimension alone - the physiology and psychology of the upright posture of man - that I could refer to. The fundamental idea behind it is that in attaining the upright posture man has the maximum defiance of gravity, and the maximum degree of instability, as compared with a four-legged animal. At the same time, by virtue of the fact that to stay upright at all his posture must be dynamic, he must constantly be making minor adjustments in order to defy gravity and avoid falling over (you have only to shut your eyes for a moment and stand on one leg to appreciate the instability latent in human uprightness). He is also more adaptive in his posture than any other animal. The skill of the matador who can pivot on his small centre of balance, and twist his body in the lateral plain more than other animals, is usually quite enough to enable him to outwit the much more linear movement of the four-legged bull.

The whole question of the relationship of a person to the ground he stands on is a fascinating one, and there are many possibilities in Laban's approach for exploring it. Security is related to one's posture in relation to the ground; indeed one can talk of grounding as a very fundamental quality which the child develops as he moves towards independence. There is also a relationship between the way one perceives the world, and the kind of grounding one has in terms of posture. If one has one's "feet on the ground," one is not going to have one's "head in the clouds." And the word "understanding" means what it says. We can think clearly about the world if we are able to stand firmly and securely in it.

The next part of movement-speech to look at is the *how* of movement - the adverbs. Laban spoke of "effort qualities." I prefer to see this as a descriptive account of the qualities and expression of energy in a person. Laban distinguished attitudes to space - flexible and inflexible - straight pathways or indirect, wandering pathways; attitudes to time - quick movements or sustained movements; and attitudes to weight - delicate movements and forceful movements. He also made an even more fundamental distinction between bound movements characterized by tension, and free-flowing movements characterized by relaxation. Again the direction of his work is to explore the range of movement possibilities, to develop the capacity for delicate movements in those who are brusque and forceful, to develop the ability to sustain aggression and to apply force, in those who are too passive or quiet.

You see how the remedial and the educational are inseparable, because here we are back with fundamental ideas of the ability to be tender and sensitive, and the ability to apply all one's energy towards a given objective. Above all, the development of awareness in people into their own energy qualities, and effort patterns.

We have had the who, the what, the where and the now of movement, but not the why. To discover the why one needs to read the movement sentence, since all movements are either expressive of some communication, or are functional in an exploratory, work-oriented kind of way.

And Laban recognized with his emphasis on group work that one moves in relation to others. The why of movement can be answered only in the content of the group process, the group that is the microcosm of society and of human interaction.

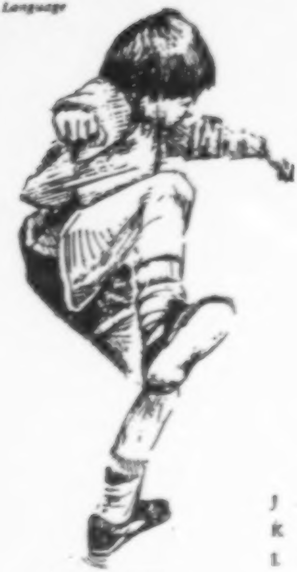
And here we enter the realm of drama.

Much has been written about the role of drama in schools, and one of the best books on the subject in my opinion is that by Brian Way. Way is one of the people who have emphasized most clearly that drama is really about becoming aware of yourself, and aware of other people. It is to do with coming alive, and with being able to feel what someone else is feeling. Again the link with the world outside the school and beyond the stage can be made with the development of the human potential movement and the encounter culture. There is now a growing realization that modern conditions of life lead to people becoming out of touch, depersonalized, and disembodied. The encounter movement is a kind of growth-orientated spontaneous experience where people are encouraged to explore the emotions that are normally not expressed in the conventions of everyday relationships.

I have left to the end what many people think of as the prime purpose of movement education to teach specific skills. I regard the specific skills as techniques that are best built on the foundation I have akeady been describing. It has been recognized in most modern drama schools, for example, that the most effective way of getting someone to portray another person convincingly, you have to get through to the actor at a deep personal level. That is why many people associated with the method school of acting have been people interested also in prsonal change, and in looking more honestly at their own motives and goals in life, than the average person perhaps does.

In the realm of specific movement skills then, there are changed much. And yet a Sobers or a Pele are distinguished most of all by the fact that they seem to involve their *whole body* in what they are doing, and by their mastering of those factors of time, space, and weight that Laban described. In a sport in which I am particularly interested - Judo - there were stereotyped ways of teaching the basic throws that were honored by tradition in Japan and which spread to the west. But recently to the consternation of the traditionalists, a man called Gleason, who is British National Coach, astonished everyone by showing from a careful examination of photographs of Judo experts in action, that these experts were breaking most of the rules that the coaches had tried to lay down. So instead of perpetuating the dead hand of a skills-tradition that the experts only were intelligent enough to violate, Gleason is now encouraging a much more personal style in the teaching of this sport. He is encouraging those learning it to approach movement situations as challenges which can be solved by trial and error, by exploration, by innovation; in other words, by sensitive and intelligent feeling for one's own body in relation to an opponent and in relation to space. Gleason has in fact brought a Laban movement approach to bear on an international sport and has revolutionized the teaching of it. The result has been a much higher standard of Judo throughout the areas where he has had influence.

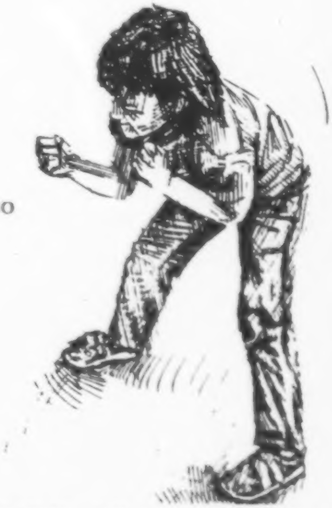
Let me try to sum up. I am suggesting that children in school would benefit from a carefully planned series of movement experiences in which they were helped to gain an increased and enriched sense of identification and feeling for



K K K K KICK

MORE ALPHABET WORDS FOR MOVEMENT

A	Angry Alligator
B	Bouncing Ball
C	Crawling Cat
D	Dancing Dolls
E	Easy Eggs
F	Flying Fingers — Flying Feet
G	Go Go Go (marching and punching)
H	Hopping High
I	I I I (pointing proudly to self)
J	Jumping Jacks
K	k-k-k-k-k-Kick
L	Leaping Long
M	Marching Merrily
N	No No No (stamping and shaking head)
O	Oh Oh Open
P	Punching Pillows
Q	Quickly and Quietly
R	Running Races
S	Sliding Slowly
T	Tip Toe Tip Toe
U	Under and Up
V	Vibrating Vigorously
W	Winding Winds
X	x-x-x (Jumping, crisscrossing arms and legs)
Y	Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes (in rhythm)
Z	ZigZagging



GO GO GO

Note: this illustration by Robert Bender, and all the following illustrations of children's movements are taken from Teresa Benzwie's book *A Moving Experience*, which is reviewed in the Book Review Section below.

their own bodies. That a Laban movement approach, coupled to some of the postural concepts found in Judo teaching, and with some of the expressive outlets used in movement therapy, can help children to get not only more in touch with themselves, but more in touch with each other. That the kinaesthetic awareness so developed is the basis on which the teaching of specific skills and crafts should rest. I am also suggesting that if this kind of body-awareness approach is coupled with the kind of self-exploration through drama that Brian Way has described, then this is a way of helping children to gain insight into the feelings of others, and so can be that basis of a rational moral education. That a rich dramatic experience of this kind can be a wellspring to nourish the arts.

Education, it seems to me, is concerned with developing sensitivity both to the outer world that we seek to control through the sciences and technologies, and in a more personal way, through crafts; and with the inner world of emotions and aesthetic appreciation that is expressed in the arts. My belief is that for the exploration of space, both outer and inner, movement education, is the best preparation.

David Boadella, for many years a headmaster in a small English village government school, is now a biopsychiatric therapist; editor of the international neo-Reichian journal *Energy and Character;* director of the Centre for Biosynthesis in Zürich, Switzerland; president of the European Association of Body Psychotherapists; and author of a number of books including *Wilhelm Reich: the Evolution of his Work; In the Wake of Reich;* and *Lifestreams.* This article is taken from a talk given to a group of physical education teachers in Liverpool, England, in 1971.

LAKE FORGET-ME-NOT

Thoughts on risk, loss and coming of age

by Dardis McNamee

My brothers and I learned to swim by the boat house at Lake Myosotis - Latin for the little blue flowers, the forget-me-nots, that grew wild along the shore. We would be held horizontal in waist-high water while we kicked and paddled and blew air out boisterously through our mouths and noses. When I began to catch on, my father took me out to where it was just barely over my head; he aimed me toward the shore, gave me a little push and let me paddle frantically in. A little later I swam around the boat house dock, and when I was secure, I was allowed to swim out to the float.

The boat house and the lake were part of the E.N. Huyck Preserve in Rensselaerville, and several nearby families were allowed to use it. The families supervised themselves. We had canoes at the boat house, green-sided wooden canoes with wicker seats. When we were able to swim, we were allowed to ride - sitting down low in the middle between the grownups who paddled from the seats.

But no children were allowed to take out a canoe until they were able to swim across the lake and back. That was the rule, enforced by all the parents. I got to ride in the rowboat when my brother swam across; I watched him churn along in the water, envying his chance to do something so important, worrying when he began to tire. If he couldn't make it, how could I? When I did, a summer or so later, I knew I had become somebody different.

Swimming across the lake - and earning the right to a canoe - was a test of our coming of age.

I drove by the lake the other day and was startled to find the old boat house gone, the shoreline empty. The red dirt road we used to use still leads down to the lake. But it is closed now with an aluminum gate and a posted sign.

Two hundred yards farther along is a public beach. Today, a generous green lawn, picnic tables and white clapboard outhouses are there for the residents of the village of Rensselaerville. From the shore, there is a small bathing area, fifty yards across and shallow most of the way out, roped off and supervised by a lifeguard.

No one is allowed to swim across the lake any more; in fact, no one may swim outside that tiny roped-off area, one that is too shallow and too small for an adult to do any real swimming. Boating is still permitted, but swimming from the boats is not. The lake is a victim of the explosion of health and safety regulations over the last twenty years, and a society-wide enthusiasm for litigation.

I would never argue against the need for *some* regulation of public swimming, particularly in an enclosed area like a swimming pool where there is always the continuing danger of contamination, where things like sewage or chemicals may have entered the body of water. And it is clear that in many places, the press of a fast-growing population has placed a nearly crushing burden on the managers of public parks and play areas.

But at Myosotis - and this is just one example of what happens at public beaches all over the state - the lake is managed in a cultural atmosphere that says, "We can't let you swim because you might get hurt - and then you might sue us." As a society, we have made this choice, and make it again every time one of us seeks personal restitution for carelessness or bad luck. The result is a loss to all of us of an important aspect of growing up.

We don't seem to understand any more that living - trying things, stretching ourselves - involves risk. By definition, risk means that things may not work out. But people act as if "risky" means merely "thrilling." How else can one explain the attitude that if something goes wrong there must be someone to blame, someone who can be sued for a whole lot of money.

We have such uneven enforcement of public safety. Many more people get hurt skiing each year than swimming. Why don't we restrict skiing to the novice trails? Couldn't we just as easily inform swimmers that a lake is half a mile across and should be attempted only by strong swimmers?

Or what about driving a car? But that's a necessity, you say. A necessity for whom? You are a lot safer on a bus.

Yet is safety really what we want? Or need? Being alive is defined by taking chances.

Think about loving, the most important experience of our lives. We can love only by risking hurt and disappointment. And loss. Everyone is going to die. Fortunately most of us learn to love before we are old enough to fear.

We can be safe - safe bundled in life jackets, squeezed between grownups, guarded by all those regulations. And never jump out of the boat.

Or we can take a risk.

Swimming across the lake was a risk. There was always the possibility we wouldn't make it. Or even that we might drown. But it was also a rite of passage, an opportunity to take responsibility for our own risk and become an adult.

After a lifetime in Rensselaerville, Katherine Huyck Elmore finds the state of affairs with Lake Myosotis discouraging. "If you want a peaceful life," she says, "never have anything to do with the waterfront."

In 1982, with the boat house still standing, she wrote a memorandum to the Preserve board suggesting an alternative, self-supporting arrangement for its use by village residents. After much discussion, no satisfactory solution was reached.

In 1983, the boat house was torn down.

This article was reprinted from *Capital Region Magazine*, Albany, New York, for August, 1987, of which **Dardis McNamee** was the managing editor at the time she wrote this beautiful piece. That her magazine was worth reading was largely due to Dardis' hard work and her ability to attract and work with creative people on the staff. The magazine, like the Myosotis boathouse, has since gone out of existence.

POEMS:

GRANDMOTHER

The recurrent rivers of sadness
Spin their journey
down her withered face.
Time has imprisoned her
and now she waits to die.
She feels her learned mind
Lose Mozart and Monet.
For eighty years she danced ballet
And now
She sits
Struggling to remember
the crochet stitch.
She is distracted by the nurse
who brings the spoon of humiliation
to her lips.
She swallows
but chooses not to taste.
It only makes her remember
the ducks
    she used to baste
        in Grande Marnier.
She is prepared to suckle on a
stranger's breast
and be fed
her last few breaths
of life.

by Jenifer Miller

Jenifer Miller was a student at Alternative Community School, in Ithaca, New York, when she wrote this poem.

MANDI BUS STATION

She plucks at my sleeve,
Uttering, muttering her story,
Following me behind my right shoulder, out of sight,
The low voice droning on and on insistently.

I shake my head,
Wave my hand in a go-away gesture,
Refuse to look.
The word stream flows unabated;
The demanding presence irks.

I turn, saying "no!" in a loud voice,
Shaking my head vehemently,
Catch a glimpse of my pursuer:
A quick flash of wolf teeth, shadowed behind dark hair;
Sharp, bright eyes; clothed in dusty brown;
Shoulder height - a child.

Again my sleeve is pulled, more insistently still,
The muttering voice telling its rehearsed drama of suffering,
On and on.
I feel the friction of steel on flint as my heart hardens
And the heat rises to flash point of response.

Then ah! I wheel, shout "No!" - strike out with left palm;
But she is gone, dancing back gracefully,
White teeth gleaming in the dark face
Alight with mirth - she laughs with delight.
She has won!
Either way, I have taken the invitation
To join her world.

We are now one in that world, she and I.
We know each other.

I toss her a quick smile of acknowledgement
As I walk away.

by Mary Leue

POEMS BY FREE SCHOOL STUDENTS:

Where Do I Begin?

If I could *see* it, I could *challenge* it.
If I could *understand* it, I could *reason* with it.
If I could *face* it, I could *learn* its weaknesses.
But how can I *understand* what I cannot see?
And how can I *see* what I cannot face .
And how can I *face* what I do not understand?
Without understanding I cannot *learn* or *challenge*
or *reason* .
Where do I begin?

Meighan Carivan

HAIKUS

Unnamed

A very hot day
a sparrow flutters its wings
orange sun glitters

At night it's quiet
in the woods I hear an owl
heart beats fast and light.

Fanon Frazier

Mountains

Walking at night
I saw a mountain, big, light
Like the light of God.

David Daniels

Boat Book

I open the tree
I am possessed by the words
ever traveling.

Elizabeth Carivan

Meighan, Fanon, David and Elizabeth, former students at the Free School in Albany, New York, are all "out there" now making it splendidly in the world - as they often come back to tell us!

STUDIES:

JEAN PIAGET, B.F. SKINNER, and JOHN DEWEY: A STUDY OF TEACHING, LEARNING, and SCHOOLING

by Rosalie Angela Bianchi

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I discuss the work of three theorists whose work has been influential on contemporary U.S. education: an epistomologist, Jean Piaget; a behavioral scientist, B.F. Skinner; and a philosopher/pragmatist, John Dewey. They developed their work from three distinct perspectives and from spending their lifetimes deeply involved in their respective fields.

I came to study these writers while teaching at a unique institution in Albany, New York - the Free School. The Free School is a learning community in the center of a larger community of people who value emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth. Our school has served children (ages two to fourteen) from families of all incomes in an inner city neighborhood since 1969. In the Free School, I have seen much learning and occasional miracles take place. Most of the adults at the school have been there for over ten years, and I have come to believe that miracles in learning require such long term commitments. Together we are learning how to be more nurturing, healing, and joyous; children thrive in this atmosphere.

From this hopeful context, I came to my theoretical studies, wanting to clarify and illuminate the learning process. I chose the three above mentioned men because their ideas have had a specific and decisive influence upon education in America. Jean Piaget researched the subjective process of cognitive growth; B.F. Skinner focused upon observable behavior; and John Dewey reflected upon the relationship of learning and education to our lives, to what we do, and to our sense of being.

This work comes from my heart and from my mind while working with the children and adults at the Free School while studying about and experimenting with the ideas of Piaget, Skinner, and Dewey. I hope that reading my paper will expand your thoughts and feelings about teaching and learning as writing it has expanded mine.

CHAPTER ONE: PIAGET

Part 1.Piaget's Theories of Cognitive Development

Jean Piaget died on September 16, 1980, having lived most of his 84 years in Switzerland. He received worldwide recognition for his theory of cognitive development in human beings, and his ideas have become indispensable to U.S. education and child psychology. Some say that, just as Freud influenced our ideas on emotional growth, so Piaget has influenced our ideas on intellectual growth.

Piaget called himself a genetic epistemologist, one who studies the development of knowledge. He wanted primarily to study the development of knowledge in the human race; thinking that there might be a relationship between this subject and the development of knowledge in children, he focused on the latter. Piaget's thought and methods were profoundly influenced by his background in biology; he looked for innate genetic patterns of cognitive growth, and studied the environment's effect on developing intelligence. His theories reflect his belief that the developing biological being becomes the thinking being.

Piaget's methods are not statistical (concerned with differences or similarities in large groups) but more qualitative and descriptive. He worked closely with individuals or small groups of children, presenting them with tasks, observing how they solved problems, and asking them open-ended questions such as how they came to their conclusions. This method, called critical exploration, allowed him to follow the child's train of thought without imposing direction or judgment; it is not a standardized procedure, but an intuitive and individualized one. Piaget's questions allowed children to think more deeply about problems; from many years of such questions and observations, Piaget gathered information on how children think and develop intellectually.

Piaget experimented with children from ages one to sixteen, taking a particular problem and presenting it to various children of the same age group. In one experiment, an assistant, trained in critical exploration, had the following interaction with Taima, aged six:

> Do you know when your birthday is?
> I already had it, May 1st.
> Mine's in June; I told you a few minutes ago. Do you see these two balls? Do you know what they are made of?

Modeling clay.
Modeling clay, yes. And what color are they?
Red.
And the other one?
White.
It's white. Now look at the two balls of modeling clay and tell me if they are both the same size. Do they both have the same amount of clay in them?
Yes.
They're the same?
Yes.
Are you sure or are you not very sure?
No.
You're not very sure? Do you think one of them is bigger than the other? Is there more clay in one of them?
(Taima hesitates, then makes up her mind.) No.
So they're both the same? Now do you know what we are going to do? We are going to say it's cake -not really, but just pretend. You take the red cake, and I'll take the white. If we eat them, we'll both eat the same amount?
Yes.
Yes, okay, now watch. I'm going to take my cake and do something with it. Tell me what I'm doing. Look. What is it?
It's a stick.
A stick. Now what do you think? If I eat this stick, and you eat your clay ball, will we both eat the same amount or does one of us eat more than the other?
You have more to eat than I do.
Yes? Why?
Because that's longer than this.
Okay. And suppose I make it longer - you see, even longer than this - you see, like this?
You'll still have more.
I still have more to eat than you do?
Yes.
If I take it again and make it into a ball, like I had it a minute ago - like it was at the beginning - how much will we have to eat?
The same.
The same?
Yes.
All right. Now we'll take your ball. Look, I'm going to flatten it out like this. What shall we call this, what I just made?

A steak.
A steak? Well okay. It's a funny color for a steak, not cooked yet right?
Yes.
Now you eat your steak and I'll eat my ball Do we both have the same amount to eat? Or does one of us have more?
Yes. (Taima smiles and points to herself.)
You have more? Why?
Because mine's fatter than yours.
Fatter. But yours is so thin. Look.
It's bigger.
Bigger? So you really have more, do you?
Is that right? Are you right? Are you sure?
Yes.
But when yours was a ball too - when it was a ball like this one - how much did we have, each of us? The same.
The same? So now it's changed?
And to make them the same again, what do we have to do?
Have to make it into a ball again?
Your clay?
Yes.[1]

For children at a certain time in development, there appears to be more clay because it is either longer or fatter or thinner, but never all at once. Piaget noted that when some children perceive one dimension, they don't appear to see the other; somewhat older children, however, would perceive changes in length and width simultaneously and see the compensation, understanding that matter was conserved because nothing was taken away. Piaget did this experiment with other children from about four to six years old, and found their reasoning to be the same as that of six-year-old Taima. Right before their eyes, they saw that nothing was taken away or added and knew this[2]; but this was no reason to believe that the two amounts were equal when they appeared to be so different. Piaget calls this reasoning prelogical - not poorly formed adult logic but logic which is the child's own, from another world; this was the world which Piaget explored.

As more of these experiments were done with children of different ages in many different areas: time, causality, space, morality, number, and chance, Piaget and his collaborators began to notice that children in specific age groups would give evidence of a similar type of reasoning. As such patterns emerged in his experiments, Piaget theorized that there might be evidence of different levels Or development. Such developmental levels were not particularly associated with a specific age group, but - more importantly - were evidence that there might be broad stages of development all human beings go through in their intellectual growth.

The sequence of stages is more important than the age at which a child reaches a stage. "We call it a sequential series of stages, each of which is a necessary part of the whole, a necessary result of all that precedes it."[3] This is not a cumulative process; the mental structures acquired at a previous level are reconstructed (brought to mind) before they can be integrated into new structures. This, according to Piaget, is part of the process of intellectual development. The important point about stages is not that children reach levels of knowledge at particular ages, but - as Piaget said - that there are broad periods of development evolving in a continuous sequence. Each stage arises out of the one preceding it by a reorganization of what has gone before.

Through his experiments, Piaget saw that there might be four major periods of development. First is the sensori-motor period from birth to eighteen months, a stage which is characterized by intelligence resulting from the child's experiences - grasping, feeling, looking, shaking, and exploring - with the physical world. Piaget gathered this information by observing his own three children and writing detailed accounts of their behavior. Here is a brief excerpt exemplifying the explorations children engage in with new objects - swinging, shaking, and rubbing them against the sides of cribs, etc.:

> (At three months, 29 days) Laurent sees for the first time a paper knife. He grasps and looks at it, but only for a moment. Afterward, he immediately swings it with his right hand, as he does all objects grasped. He then rubs it by chance against the wicker of the bassinet and tries to produce the sound heard as though the knife were the rattle he has used for this purpose. It then suffices that I place the object in his left hand for him to shake in the same fashion...[4]

Through this kind of activity, new objects are incorporated into existing mental structures - ideas about the nature of the physical world.

The next stage occurs roughly between the ages of two and five years, as children begin to deal with the world on a symbolic level, including mental images, drawings, dreams, make-believe, gestures, and language. When mother leaves the room, the child now has a mental picture of her and doesn't get as upset; he or she imitates and begins to adjust to the world of adults. Piaget calls the thinking of this stage "prelogical," as in Taima's thinking in the experiment with the balls of clay. This type of literal, of-the-moment, and egocentric thinking comes from the child's direct experience with the world: "What you see is what you get."

It is a unique way of thinking, and - I believe - somehow deeply necessary to a child's development. Piaget calls this the pre-operational stage because the child is capable of symbolic thought but unable to manipulate symbols (as in mathematics) and perform operations such as addition and subtraction. He/she cannot grasp reversibility - the relationship between adding and subtracting, nor can he/she imagine an object from the perspective of another person.

Piaget and his collaborator, Barbel Inhelder, devised a test called "the three mountain problem."[5] They set three mountains on a table and one chair at each side of the table. The child sat in one of the chairs, and a doll was moved from one to the other of the three remaining chairs; the child was then asked what the doll could see from each of its three stations. He might respond by drawing a doll's-eye view from each position, by selecting from drawings already made, or by constructing the doll's view with cardboard cut-outs. The pre-operational child could not do this; only children in the later part of the next stage, the concrete operational stage, could identify the doll's view with confidence and accuracy.

I think that it is somehow necessary for children to be egocentric at this time in their lives. People often describe this stage in negatives, or in terms of a lack of ability. I think it has something to do with the building of confidence in one's own perceptions.

The third major period starts at about seven or eight years of age, and is characterized by the ability to classify concrete objects, order them, and establish correspondence between them. The child can conserve quantity and number, and can understand parts/whole relationships. Piaget did the following experiment, using three cardboard boxes and 20 wooden beads (18 brown and 2 white ones); all of the beads were spread out, clearly visible, on the bottom of one of the boxes.

> Bes (6; 2): Are all these beads made of wood, or not?
> They're all made of wood.
> Are there more wooden ones or more brown ones?
> More brown ones.
> If I put the brown beads in that box, will there be any beads left in this one?
> Yes, the white ones.
> And if I put the wooden beads in that other empty box, will there be any left?
> No.
> Well then, if we made a necklace with all the wooden beads that would be in that box, and if we made another necklace with the brown beads that would be in the other box, which would be longer?
> The brown one[6].

This is an example of pre-operational thought. A child in the concrete operational stage will answer strongly that the wooden bead necklace would be longer because, "there are more wooden beads than brown ones"; he/she understands this relationship. Whereas the pre-operational child will not see the inconsistencies in a situation and is not troubled by "obvious" not see the inconsistencies in a situation and is not troubled by "obvious" (to us) contradictions, the concrete operational child does see and is troubled by them. Each time he/she experiences difficulty and works out the problem, the child grows intellectually.

At age eleven or twelve, the fourth major period - the formal operations period - begins. Operations are no longer applied only to material objects, but to hypotheses and propositions as well; there is a kind of transcendence of the immediate - a systematic trying out of possibilities.

John Philips, in his book, *The Origins of Intellect, Piaget's Theory*[7] spoke of the relationship between the last three stages, saying that the pre-operational child is capable of preposterous flights of fancy. I would call it a kind of magical thinking based on not having all the information adults have in perceiving a problem and being totally wrapped up in the moment and within themselves. The concrete operational child's thinking comes from his/her concern for organizing the actual data of his/her senses. The adolescent in the formal operations period is capable of getting into his/her imagination and can think of possibilities; he/she can also keep in mind his/her knowledge about operations, conservation numbers, reversibility, cause and effect, classes, etc.

By "formal" operations period, Piaget also means that the child can follow the form of an argument and disregard its specific content. Take the syllogism: "All children like spinach; boys are children; therefore, boys like spinach." A child not in the formal operations period will respond to the content (especially if he/she has strong feelings about spinach), but the adolescent can follow the argument and respond to the form.[8]

According to Piaget, these stages are more than an outgrowth due to maturation of the nervous system; they are evidence of the progressive development of intelligence which is dependent on maturation, on physical and empirical experience, on social interaction, and on a process Piaget calls "equilibration." Movement from one stage to the next, therefore, is an interactive, constructive process.

Piaget was asked the question: "Can one accelerate the stages indefinitely?" He called this a ridiculous question, noting that American educators often ask it. He doubted whether there was any advantage to such acceleration: "...the human baby develops more slowly than other animals, but goes much further in development. There must be a reason for this. It may be that there is an optimal speed of development for each species." Another time he said, "development of knowledge is spontaneous and, like a biological clock, it cannot be advanced."[9]

Maturation is a factor in cognitive development, providing the child with more opportunities for responding to the environment as he learns to grasp, crawl, and walk. Maturation involves what is inherited and what is determined biologically; certain experiences cannot be assimilated into the child's thought structures unless the child has matured enough to do a certain task, e.g., coordinating vision with hand movement in order to grasp.

The second factor mentioned as necessary for cognitive development is physical/empirical experience which comes from interacting with the world. Piaget believes that thoughts and images are formed from motor actions; the child then constructs knowledge of the physical world. A child constructs logical relationships between objects he/she knows; he/she can perform operations on these objects[10]. These relationships include comparisons such as higher, lower, faster, or bigger; they exist not in the objects but in the mind of the child who compares them.

The third factor, social interaction, is the information learned from other people and books, etc. Interaction with others helps the child open up to different ways of looking at things. For Piaget, language does not form intelligence, but develops first, out of interaction on social and physical planes; the ability to speak comes out of structures the child has formed from birth. Piaget disagrees with Chomsky, who says that language develops out of an inner fixed core which is within the child before he/she has had any experience with the world. Chomsky has also said that intelligence develops out of our ability to use language. Not so, says Piaget; our intelligence develops through an internal process of construction and interaction with the environment[11].

The fourth factor necessary for cognitive development concerns this internal process of construction; it is the coordinating integrating function, equilibration. Within each of us is a system integrating incoming data with existing structures and ideas; assimilation is our ability to take in new information as we incorporate sensation, experience, and ideas into our own activity. Assimilation is constantly balanced by accommodation which occurs when the input changes the structure within the mind. "The entire scheme of assimilation must alter as it accommodates to the elements it assimilates. That is, it modifies itself in relation to the particularities of events but does not lose its continuity[12].

A baby receiving his/her first toy tries to put it in his/her mouth, accommodating to it by adjusting his/her mouth to its size. He/she learns that it can't be swallowed and modifies his/her understanding of objects to include edible and non-edible; he/she has assimilated the information and accommodated it to his/her inner scheme (scheme, meaning a continually changing framework in which incoming sensory data can fit and new information can be assimilated). The baby is organizing new experiences in various ways, adapting to the environment and developing intellectually. This baby is also seeking ways to achieve a balance between incoming data and inner schemes and between what he/she understands and what he/she experiences in the environment - in other words, a balance between assimilation and accommodation. Piaget calls this balance which the child naturally seeks equilibrium. Cognitive equilibriums differ from mechanical ones, which conserve themselves without change and are not states of rest as in thermodynamic equilibriums. A cognitive equilibrium is closer to a stationary but dynamic state with exchanges capable of building and maintaining structural order in an open system...[13]. An organism achieves equilibrium through the regulating process of equilibration.

Equilibration enables the organism to go from certain states of equilibrium to others which are qualitatively different, passing through many non-balances and re-equilibrations. The organism can return to a former equilibrium; in that case, however, there is no cognitive growth. There are three forms of equilibration[14].

1. When there is an interaction between the subject and objects, equilibration occurs between the assimilation of schemes of action and accommodation of these schemes to the objects. There is a mutual conservation; if not, the activity is abandoned.

2. When subsystems interact, there can be equilibration. There is a reciprocal assimilation and a reciprocal accommodation. Piaget performed an experiment where a child was presented with a problem; in order to solve it, he would have had to have integrated two systems. The child was given dolls and sticks of ordered heights, and was asked to match up the sticks with the corresponding dolls. The dolls were larger than the sticks, so the child had to be able to note the order of sizes to match them up.

3. The third form of equilibration occurs between subsystems and the totality which includes them. Piaget used the example of a person walking around a moving train; the person is the subsystem, and the train is the totality. The person assimilates the movement of the train and accommodates to it by a particular motion. The entire train assimilates and accommodates the moving person; it becomes not Just a moving

train but a moving train with a moving person on it. There is a mutual conservation.

Piaget noted that in the above three examples, only positive characteristics are dealt with; when equilibrium happens, there is a relationship between positive and negative characteristics. The subject or person must be able to perceive what is so and what is not; he must be able to discriminate, only a clear and exact relationship between affirmations and negations ensures equilibrium[15].

What causes an organism to seek equilibrium through equilibration? A person perceives a contradiction, or experiences something which does not fit in with his ideas or structures about the world; he goes into disequilibrium and seeks to re-equilibrate. Piaget has said that non-balance might be the driving force behind development; without it, knowledge remains static. But the driving force of the non-balance is also measured by the possibility of overcoming it and reaching a higher level of equilibrium; progressive equilibrations are central to cognitive, development. Piaget's theory, therefore, sees knowledge as stemming not from maturation and experience alone but from equilibration; knowledge is a new construction arising from the interaction between the child and the environment.

FOOTNOTES

1. Briunguier, Jean Claude, *Conversations with Jean Piaget,* Trans. Basia Gulati, Chicago,University of Chicago Press, 1980, p. 28.

2.Ibid., p. 28-9.

3. Piaget, J.,*Biology and Knowledge*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1971, p. 16.

4. Piaget, J., *The Origins of Intelligence in Children*, Trans. M. Cook, New York, International Universities Press, 1952, p. 197.

5. Piaget, J. & B.Inhelder, *The Child's Conception of Space*, trans.F.J. Langdon & J.L. Lunzer, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1956, pp. 210-11.

6. Piaget, J. & Alina Szeminska, *The Child's Conception of Number*, Trans. C. Gattegno & F.M. Hodgson, New York, Humanities Press, Inc., 1952, p. 165.

7. Philips, John, *The Origins of Intellect: Piaget's Theory:*, San Francisco, W.H. Freeman and Company, p. 101.

8. Ibid., p. 103.

9. Gallagher, Jeanette M. and D. Kim Reid, *The Learning Theory of Piaget and Inhelder*. Monterey, California, Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., p. 205.

10. Ibid., pp. 41-2.

11. Ibid., p. 38.

12. Piaget, J.,*The Development of Thought, Equilibration of Cognitive Structures* , New York,Viking Press, 1977, p. 9.

13. Ibid., p. 4.

14. Ibid., pp. 8-9.

15. Ibid., pp. 16-17.

Part 2. Piaget's Theory of Learning

Piaget described two types of learning. The first involves learning in the strict sense[1] in which knowledge is gained through direct environmental experience with people, objects, and culture; the capacity for this type is subordinated to development. In order for the child to learn, he/ she must have the capacity to assimilate a new experience or information. For example, a small baby will not learn from a ball being rolled towards him/her because he/she hasn't yet developed eye-hand coordination; learning in the strict sense, then, is acquiring information and skills.

Learning also occurs in the broader sense, according to Piaget[2]. This results from the interplay of maturation, experience, and the self-regulating process - equilibration. In the course of this broader process of learning, a child tries to apply a scheme or a strategy to a situation, e.g., a set of ideas on how an object responds when thrown. If his/her scheme (all round things bounce) is inappropriate or inadequate, several things could occur. The child might be unable to see a conflict and not wonder why it didn't bounce, or - noticing the conflict - he/she might seek an explanation to solve the problem.

Similarly, if a child is shown a reflection of the letters "A" and "R" in a mirror, he/she might not wonder why some things are reflected a certain way and others are not; he/she might not notice that the "R" is reversed and the "A" isn't (thus avoiding a conflict), or he/she might dismiss it as being caused by a magic mirror. Another possibility, again, is to seek an explanation; Piaget describes the means for this search as the process of achieving compensation between affirmations and negations, between what is there and what is not.

Affirmations are empirical facts, while negations are constructed by abstracting some kind of relationship; they are not present in experience. The affirmations are the reversal of "R" and the fact that "A" remains the same; the negations are that, in that relationship, "R" is reversed and "A" isn't. Negations are constructed through reflexive abstraction[3], which is an inner process of taking an idea from a lower level (motor or visual) to a higher level (thought), comparing and looking for relationships, and drawing inferences which allow the child to reorganize his/her knowledge.

The child will realize, through this process of reflexive abstraction, that the mirror is not magical but that the source of contradiction lies in the relationships of the letters and the mirror. The child then constructs a rule about this; it is during construction of this rule that learning takes place. When this new rule is constructed, the child can anticipate when an event will occur (what will happen when "A" and "R" are reflected and when "B" and "O" are reflected); consequently, he/she won't experience any conflict when it does. Learning this rule is evidence that the child has reached a new equilibrium, which opens up possibilities for him/her to experience new conflicts in further experiments with a mirror and symmetry. This is learning in the broad sense. From the experiments of Piaget and one of his collaborators, Barbel Inhelder, Gallagher and Reid have found principles of learning which they feel are clearly illustrated in

Piaget's work[4]:

1. Learning is an internal process of construction. Children infer knowledge from their own activity; nothing is imposed from without. Piaget gives an example of a boy at the beach, arranging pebbles in a row and counting ten, then arranging them in a circle and noting that there are still ten. The boy, says Piaget, has discovered that sum is independent of order. Nothing external imposed itself on this boy; he counted the pebbles through empirical abstraction, which happens when we abstract properties from objects. The boy abstracted a rule from his activities, and - because he reflected on what he did - he learned through an inner process which Piaget calls reflexive abstraction.

2. Learning is a higher level reorganization. Children learn by observing objects and reorganizing what they learn from their activities on a higher mental level through equilibration, which in turn leads to higher equilibriums. Equilibration is a self-correcting process which results in reorganization and learning; in the instance above, something was learned about mirrors and reversibility.

3. Learning is subordinated to development and cannot occur unless there is the physical ability to perform certain acts. Children must also have the capacity to respond to a new experience or concept, and this depends on what the child has learned so far and what structures he has acquired. Thus, learning is subordinated to physical as well as cognitive development.

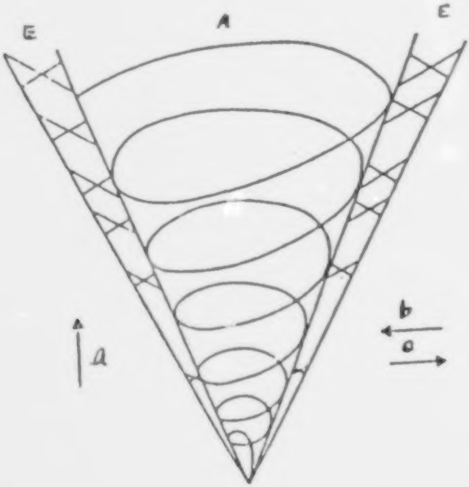
4. Growth in knowledge is often sparked by feedback

which results from questioning, contradictions, and consequent reorganization. Here, feedback means an internal process of adjusting information with expectations until the child can correctly anticipate what will happen. Self-correction happens when a child has the ability to observe contradictions between expectations and the results of his/her actions.

5. The previous questions, contradictions, and reorganization are often sparked by social interaction. Piaget believed that children benefit from social interaction with peers and those older than they. Sometimes, children playing alone won't come to the same realizations as children playing with others.

6. Since awareness (or conscious realization) is a process of construction rather than sudden insight, understanding lags behind action. Piaget has demonstrated that children are able to perform tasks successfully without understanding why. According to Piaget, knowledge results from discovery and invention; it is not something which is acquired immediately, but is - rather - constructed.

Piaget describes the way in which knowledge is constructed as a diagram in the form of a spiral..[5] The spiral itself is the development of knowledge; the borders on either side represent interaction with the environment, and "E" represents empirical abstraction. Through our senses, we take in experiences from our interaction and activity with the environment. The X's are called "reflexive frames" and are recording instruments; information is taken in. The spiral "A" is recording instruments; information is taken in. The spiral "A" is the process of reflexive abstraction; vector "a" represents successive levels of cognitive development. Vector "b" represents changes due to the environment, and vector "c" represents explorations - which may be trial and error - leading to reorganizations in response to the environment. The spiral is opening and widening.



Concerning growth of knowledge, Piaget says, "Any knowledge raises new problems as it resolves preceding ones."[6] The stages grow out of each other in a continuous process; there are no tasks neatly separating one stage from another. What a child learns is dependent upon what he/she has learned before, and each new structure he/she incorporates opens up new possibilities as the spiral widens.

Piaget sees the development of knowledge in children as a continually growing cognitive structure. This cannot fit into a theory which reduces intellectual development into bits of learning. I will look at such a reductionist theory in the next part of my paper. First, however, in what way do I see this theory relating to education and to my experience at the Free School?

FOOTNOTES:

1. Gallagher and Reid, *Learning Theory of Piaget and Inhelder,* p. 39.
2. Ibid., p. 39.
3. Ibid., p. 30.
4. Ibid., pp. 4-7.
5. Gallagher and Reid, p. 36.
6. Piaget, Jean, *The Development of Thought, the Equilibration of Cognitive Structures,* New York: Viking Penguin, 1977, p. 30.

Part 3. How Has Piaget's Theory Been Applied to Education?

Educators have tried to pull techniques or a method of teaching from Piaget's work, especially from his concept of developmental stages. Following Piaget's method of questioning children and his experiments, educators have suggested that one should teach the experiment and help the children understand the concept more thoroughly and consistently than they could on their own.[1]

One of Piaget's experiments involved conservation of substance (the experiment with the balls of clay was one of these). An example of this would be measuring two equal cups of juice into a tall, thin glass and a shallow bowl, respectively, and asking a child which holds more. Most younger children would say that the glass holds more because the level of juice is higher; some children will choose the bowl because it is wider. These children have not yet grasped the notion of conservation. For some children there will be a period of confusion and disequilibrium, and - if the concept of conservation is constructed - they will realize that both receptacles hold the same amount of juice.

Educators, particularly in America and, most notably, Jerome Bruner, believe that conservation can be taught at any age if presented in the proper form. Bruner thought that by giving children more experience with liquids and different size containers, they would be able to develop the concept of conservation at an earlier age. Because of these types of experiments, educators thought that they could speed up a child's rate of development. It seems, however that Piaget was not the least bit interested in this, wondering what good would come of it. He did say, however, that a child with a good mental inheritance and an environment which encourages creative experimentation may develop some logical structures at an earlier age. Elkind points out: Piaget evolves both a nature and nurture theory. It depends on both environment and biology (nature of the being).

My understanding here is that Piaget sees that enriched experience on the sensori-motor level is important in development, as are varied experiences in social interaction. He does not, however, advocate accelerated learning techniques performed by adults with "pedagogical mania."

I also think that Piaget's work presents a model of how development occurs, rather than suggesting techniques or methods to use in the classroom. A study of his theory, however, helps one to consider the inner development of intelligence in children, knowing that this development proceeds at its own pace.

In *Science Education* [2], Piaget writes that in school, the emphasis should be on activity and spontaneous work based on personal need and interest. He advocates suitable equipment which would provide a catalyst for the transformation of external active manipulative experiences into internal intellectual realities - things which would help form abstractions.

According to Piaget, a student is motivated by an internal source, and his intellectual development is aided and abetted by environmental intrusions; this is an interactionist's point of view. Piaget does not assume innate knowledge - his theory is constructivist; knowledge is built from the child's activity. Piaget's kind of school would be filled with social interaction, and physical and mental activity; conflict, contradictions, and questions arise naturally out of these processes. The situation is ripe for disequilibrium, and - possibly - equilibration to a higher level to occur. Actually, the situation I have described is a lot like everyday living; evidently, schools haven't modeled themselves after this.

Piaget makes many strong statements about education in *Science Education and the Psychology of the Child*. The fundamental problem, he says, is that educators are more interested in teaching than they are in children. They concentrate on the methods and curriculum on which their training has focused them, while their knowledge of child psychology is often sketchy and their interest in the child's emotional and mental development limited. Teachers want to have children listen, but Piaget says that this is not how children learn. Knowledge is derived from action.

Piaget says that if the aim of education is to form the intelligence rather than to stock the memory, then education is in grave deficiency. Student teachers are not trained to observe and question children; if they were, they would learn so much more about how children's minds develop. He said that teachers need to carry out their own research, "to see how difficult it is to make themselves understood by the children, and to understand what the children are saying."[3] Piaget describes a year-long primary school training program which requires that all student teachers take part in a research program.[4] This is an intellectual training, he says, which forces students to understand the complexity of the problems involved in teaching children far better than from a professor's lecture.

One more word about Piaget's view of schooling and children. Piaget states that while his emphasis is on children pursuing their own interests, this does not mean that the best method of education is to let children do exactly as they like. He notes, however, that if a child is interested in what he/she does, he/she is capable of making efforts to the limit of his/ her physical endurance. . .only then will true discipline come into being true discipline to which the children themselves consent. In this way, says Piaget, the children who come out of our schools will be capable of creativity and production, and not simply repetition.[5]

FOOTNOTES:

1. Bruner, Jerome, *Toward a Theory of Instruction* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, p. 214.
2. Piaget, Jean,*Science Education and the Psychology of the Child* , New York: Orion Press, 1970, pp. 51-54.
3. Piaget, Jean, *Relations Between the Notions of Space, Time, and Speed in Children.*, Ripple and Rockcastle, eds., *Piaget Rediscovered*, p. 40.
4. Piaget, Jean,*To Understand is to Invent: The Future of Education* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1973, pp. 129-30.
5. Ibid., p. 20.

Part 4. Piaget's Theory Reflected at the Free School

At the Free School, I see Piaget's ideas that social interaction, physical experience, conflict, and interest in one's own activity promote intellectual development. We believe in social interaction, and it happens continually - between everybody in the school, and - most importantly - between children of different ages. Our classes are mixed; in the math room, math is being done on first to sixth grade levels. The same is true in the writing, and - to some extent - the reading and social studies rooms. During free times, you'll find children of different ages reading to each other, teaching each other how to use the computer, playing games, and doing projects together. Once a month, all the elementary school kids plus the adults go to a farm in the Berkshires to live, work, and play together.

We have a self-governance system, where any child in the elementary part of the school (ages five to fourteen) can call a council meeting if he/she has a problem; everyone in this part of the school must attend. A child is elected chairperson and runs the meeting following Robert's Rules of Order. The children and adults support the child in solving his/her problem, but most of the responsibility for the solution rests on him/her. Each incident is so unique that it is difficult to discuss how it is handled, but I will say that much weight is given to the child's willingess to solve the problem; if it is important to him/her, it is usually solved.

In these council meetings, I see children experiencing conflict within themselves in order to understand another's point of view. When a child expects a situation to go one way and it goes another, perhaps that is an opportunity for the child to experience an unbalance or disequilibrium (as Piaget calls it), and possibly re-equilibrate to a higher cognitive level. But, as Piaget says, cognitive development is an inner process, and growth depends on what is happening with the child. At the Free School, we provide opportunities for growth; the rest is up to the child.

There is much activity at the Free School, and children show a genuine interest in what they are doing, from learning skills to playing soccer. Whatever they do, especially in the learning of math, reading, and writing, you have a sense when you enter the classroom that they are intensely involved in their own activities. They are not trying to please a teacher or earn good grades (indeed, we don't give grades); there is a sense that learning is their process, and that they derive much satisfaction from being able to say, "I can do it."

Children often come to the Free School from public school with a sense that learning skills is something adults want them to do; such children have formed habits of pleasing adults or reacting against them. I have a feeling that the latter type is often called learning-disabled, a behavior problem, or hyperactive. Children who have been at the Free School since they were three or four years old are usually "raring to go" with learning, and view it as the exciting process which it is. What is the difference?

At the Free School, we are more interested in children than in teaching; we do not practice techniques or one particular method. We care mostly about being with the children, nurturing them, setting limits for them, giving them choices, and helping them to get through whatever is blocking them from whatever is blocking them from experiencing their own competence. We are acutely aware of the interconnectedness of emotional and intellectual development. I have seen children express feelings which they have been holding back for a long time - e.g., grief or anger - and afterwards, skyrocket intellectually.

At the Free School, we listen to children and we ask them to listen to us, not as bosses but as fellow human beings who have been in the world longer than they and who have something to teach them. Children know when adults are speaking truthfully and can sense emotional honesty; I believe that an adult-child relationship happens when there is truth between them. With truth, teaching and learning can happen in the exciting and marvelous way in which they should; adults and children are vitally interested in what they are doing and phrases like "attention span" have no meaning.

It is my belief that when emotional honesty is not there, children will spend most of their time trying to figure out what the adults' real feelings are in order to establish a safe place for themselves. Not knowing where the adult is emotionally can cause children - especially the sensitive ones - to feel and act out anxiety. The adult, out of touch with his feelings, will often respond with anger (perhaps this was the feeling which the child detected in the first place). The child relieves his anxiety by getting the adult to experience his repressed feelings.

If we want children to be creative and productive, we must let them experience a safe place in school, where they can learn to trust adults, and clearly know the rules and the results of their choices. This is especially true for children who have been deprived of trust and love; these are the most sensitive ones who are often labeled hyperactive, emotionally disturbed, or learning-disabled. These children are often subjected to "techniques and methods," when what they need are adults who are straightrorward, honest, and loving with them. Then, they can immerse themselves in their own activities and get on with their intellectual development.

This brings me to a criticism of Piaget. When he discusses learning and education, he doesn't mention the student-teacher relationship, and the emotional growth which must occur before there can even be a relationship. Children usually will not immerse themselves in growing and learning activities unless they feel safe to do so; they will not take intellectual risks or let themselves experience the imbalance necessary for intellectual growth. They will not let teachers be with them in this process unless there is trust. Although there are children who will learn intellectually no matter what their relationship with the teacher, I think that they lose out because - on some level - they are blocking, perhaps, emotional awareness. I believe that in order for children to become creative, productive adults, we must allow them to grow emotionally and intellectually.

Since Piaget's theory of cognitive development describes an inner process, it presents difficulty for anyone wanting to measure objectively. The criteria are subjective; Piaget is dealing with an unconscious process. Perhaps Piaget was so focused on his extensive work that it did not seem important to him to consider the relationship between a child's intellectual development and his emotional connectedness with the environment.

In the next part of my paper, I will consider a man who deals neither with emotional development or inner mental processes - B.F. Skinner. In his study, Skinner investigates behavior only; he has something very different to say about teaching and learning.

Chapter II. Skinner

Part 1. Skinner's Theory of Operant Conditioning

Burris Frederick Skinner is an influential behavioral scientist. As head of the University of Illinois and full professor at Harvard University's psychology departments, Skinner, under Navy and other agency grants, extensively studied animal behavior under laboratory conditions and developed a method of shaping and controlling this behavior. Throughout his work (especially his books: *Science and Human Behavior*, 1952; *Walden Two*, 1948; *The Technology of Teaching*, 1968; and *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, 1971), Skinner was convinced that he must apply his discoveries to human behavior; indeed, this seems to have been his major concern for the past thirty years. Skinner successfully developed a rigorous scientific method in his research of animal behavior, and - as he said in *Science and Human Behavior* - "The methods of science have been enormously successful wherever they have been tried. Let us apply them to controlling and shaping animal behavior which he wanted to apply to human beings. Based on the idea that an organism will behave in a certain way provided that reinforcement follows, Skinner used operant conditioning to teach pigeons how to play pingpong, exhibit color discrimination, guide missiles to targets, and perform other behaviors coming from their natural movements.

Skinner worked with pigeons in a specialized laboratory, controlling as many aspects of their lives as possible in order to isolate certain behavior. A pigeon was put in a plain box with minimal distractions, and deprived of food; afterwards, it was fed by means of a mechanical tray which opened into the box, until it did not exhibit abnormal behavior around eating. Food could then be used as a reward or reinforcement.

Skinner chose a frequently occurring and easily observable behavior he wanted to condition from the bird's natural movements - raising its head. He began to feed the pigeon with a mechanical tray every time it raised its head to a certain level. Almost immediately, the pigeon's behavior changed; its head seldom fell below a certain level, and - eventually - it kept its head up almost all of the time.

"Operant" is Skinner's term for behavior which acts upon the environment to generate consequences. Reflex behavior, on the other hand, is connected with the organism's internal physiology; there is an external agent, called a stimulus, which controls the response. An example of this would be a light shining in an eye and the pupil contracting.

A fear response to an enemy is also a reflex. Reflexes can be conditioned; Skinner describes a conditioned reflex as occurring when "a previously neutral stimulus acquires the power to elicit a response which was originally elicited by another stimulus."[2] Pavlov worked in this area to modify and control reflex behavior, conditioning dogs to salivate at the sound of bell rather than at the sight and smell of food.

Reflexes are mostly concerned with the organism's survival, conditioned reflexes occur when the organism adapts to the environment. A cat responding to the opening of the refrigerator door is an example of this. But there is a far more complex and flexible type of behavior with which Skinner is concerned - he called it operant behavior. Operant behavior has an effect on the surrounding world; it is not limited to an organism's internal physiology. It is this behavior which allows the organism to get its needs met in a consistent manner;[3] it is apparently active, rather than passive, behavior. The consequences of this behavior feed back into the organism, and may change the probability that the behavior will recur:

> If a cat is placed in a box from which it can escape only by unlatching a door, it will exhibit many different kinds of behavior, some of which may be effective in opening the door. When the cat was put into the box again and again, the behavior which led to escape tended to occur sooner and sooner until eventually escape was as simple and as quick as possible.[4]

Thorndike performed this experiment, and has said that the cat's behavior was "stamped in" because it was followed by the opening of the door. This was called learning, and behaviorists began to use learning curves to track the rate at which new behavior was acquired. The cat's behavior is an example of operant behavior. According to Skinner, many experiments of this kind which were conducted yielded more information about the animals' reactions to various situations than information on how the behavior arose.

This is not an example of operant conditioning; the operant behavior was not conditioned. The behavior of opening the door was produced by trial and error - a waste of time to Skinner, since that behavior could have been acquired much faster in operant conditioning. Skinner could also have shaped the behavior to a special way of opening the door by carefully observing the cat's behavior and reinforced the behavior he wanted.

Skinner was concerned with how operant behavior was formed, manipulating it, reinforcing it in various ways, and discovering all the possibilities for shaping it in and out of the laboratory. He said, "Reinforcing operant behavior does more than increase the frequency of response but improves the efficiency of behavior and maintains the behavior in strength long after acquisition or frequency has ceased to be of interest."[5]

Reinforcing operant behavior is a powerful means of control, which Skinner noted occurs almost constantly; the environment continuously reinforces behavior in animals and human beings. Skinner is talking about an enormous range of behavior which adapts to the environment through a feedback system of the behavior's consequences into the organism.

Human beings act upon the environment constantly, and many of our actions are reinforcing. Through operant conditioning (reinforcing operant behavior), the environment builds our basic repertoire of behavior (as Skinner built the pigeon's behavior by providing reinforcement). This repertoire is exemplified by learning to keep balance, walk, play games, handle instruments and tools, talk, write, sail boats, drive cars, etc.

Through scientific analysis and under laboratory conditions, Skinner discovered that an organism must be stimulated by the consequences of its actions if operant conditioning is to take place: in other words, reinforcement must be important to the organism. When a particular action no longer pays off, that operant behavior will gradually cease to occur; in Skinner's terms, the behavior will be extinguished. He also discovered something quite extraordinary about reinforcement: under intermittent reinforcement, operant behavior is very resistant to extinction, and the resulting behavior is exceptionally stable.

In an experiment, pigeons were reinforced on the average of every five seconds, but intervals varied from a few seconds after behavior to a ten minute delay, and - occasionally - to just after behavior occurred. The behavior of pecking a circle was very constant under this schedule; pigeons reinforced in this way have been observed to respond for as long as fifteen hours without pausing longer than fifteen to twenty seconds between intervals. A pigeon has been known to peck a circle 10,000 times without receiving reinforcement after an intermittent reinforcement schedule.

With a schedule of steady, continuous reinforcement (one per minute), an animal will respond at a very frequent rate; if the animal is reinforced at longer intervals (every five minutes), the animal's rate of response will be much slower. It is as if the animal learns that reinforcement is not coming for five minutes, so it might as well slow down.

Fixed ratio reinforcement, which is based on a certain number of responses (not the time it takes to perform certain behaviors), generates a high rate of response. This high rate depends, however, on the number of responses needed before the reinforcement occurs. Factories where people have to do a certain amount of work within a certain time period use this in piecework pay and principle. Workers tend to perform slowly at the beginning and more rapidly as they near the end of the work to be completed. This higher rate of performance is usually fatiguing, and - in general - this reinforcement method results in an inefficient use of time.[6]

Intermittent reinforcement seems to be most efficient; with this type of reinforcement, the organism will stabilize its behavior at a given rate. This is why gambling is so difficult to stop, in some cases. Many of the reinforcers on which humans depend, such as affection and approval, occur intermittently. This is because people behave differently at different times and, perhaps - as Skinner said - people have found out that this type of reinforcement works.

If the schedule of reinforcement is important, so is the fact that it must stimulate the organism. According to Skinner, we don't know for sure why a reinforcer is reinforcing, except in a biological context - food, shelter, sex.[7] In other areas, we don't know whether something is reinforcing unless we know the history of reinforcement or can test it. Also, one may not be conscious of what is reinforcing for oneself; only in retrospect can one see whether behavior was the result of certain consequences.

It is not correct to say that operant reinforcement strengthens the response which precedes it; the response has already occurred and cannot be changed. What is changed is the future probability of responses in the same class. According to Skinner, it is a mistake to think that a man or woman acts out of a purpose or goal. Instead of saying that a man acts out of knowledge of the consequences which are to follow his behavior, we simply say that he behaves because of the consequences which have followed similar behavior in the past.

Most statements about goals and purposes are interpretations; we can describe only what a man does, not why he does it. Skinner says that statements about goals and purposes are misleading: "I am looking for my glasses" is equal to "I have lost my glasses and when I have done this in the past, I have found my glasses."[8]

The aforementioned pigeon experiment is a description of the stamping-in process of operant conditioning. It is isolating and choosing a bit of behavior, observing its frequency, finding a reinforcer, reinforcing the behavior each time it occurs, and - later - reinforcing intermittently.

When complicated behavior is involved, the entire process of operant conditioning is a gradual one, as in learning to walk; at no point, says Skinner, does this kind of behavior appear full-blown in a person's repertoire.[9]

In operant conditioning behavioral changes are only gradually modified in a process similar to the molding of a piece of clay. An experimenter can start with reinforcing a series of approximations and eventually bring a rare response to a very high probability of its occurrence. In human beings, Skinner observed, one begins with basic undifferentiated material; behavior is continually modified from this. Through reinforcement of slightly exceptional cases, a child begins to walk, talk, and exhibit the enormous repertoire of a mature adult.[10].

Skinner says that one can describe operant conditioning without any mention of stimuli. While reinforcing the pigeon's head movements, the experimenter waited for the behavior to occur naturally; he did not elicit it by the presentation of a specific stimulus. In the experiment with the cat in the box, the experimenter did nothing, aside from arranging circumstances, to bring about the behavior. It would, however, be inefficient in the control of behavior to wait for the desired response to occur before reinforcing it. In order to instill new behavior in an organism through operant conditioning, one would use 'discriminative stimuli.'[11]

The image of '9 x 9' on a flashcard is a discriminative stimulus; the answer (81) is the response, and an inner or outer voice indicating whether that is correct is the reinforcement. The flashcard does not elicit a response in the same way that an alarm does. A response to this would be a reflex, and - in reflex behavior - the stronger the stimulus, the greater the reaction to it. The reaction to a discriminative stimulus is more flexible and depends on past reinforcement. Another example of a discriminative stimulus is the expression, 'Come to dinner,' which leads to the response of going to the table, followed by the reinforcement of food.

In reflex behavior, the elicitive stimulus appears to be more coercive because the causal connection is clear and easily observed. Discriminative stimuli, however, share their control with other things in the environment.

'Come to dinner' may share control with the power of the person speaking and past reinforcement; this control is not easy to observe. This is the distinction Skinner makes between voluntary and involuntary behavior.

Since it is Skinner's belief that behavior is not under the control of inner will, the distinction he makes between what we call voluntary and involuntary behavior (for lack of better terms) is in terms of the kind of control. Voluntary behavior is under the control of discriminative stimuli and past reinforcements, and involuntary behavior is under the control of a stimulus and is called a reflex. With this in mind, we can say that operant and involuntary behavior is under the control of a stimulus and is called a reflex. With this in mind, we can say that operant conditioning is the modification of (what we call) voluntary behavior.

Since inner states or volition are not directly observable, Skinner does not deal with them; he does not deny their existence, but makes it clear that it is unnecessary to consider them in a functional analysis of behavior. He has often said that he is interested only in facts about behavior gleaned from scientific analysis - not conjecture or ideas based on anecdotal information. Underlying Skinner's belief in scientific analysis is an empiricist's viewpoint - reliance on observation and experiments to decide what is true. Sensory experience and direct observation are an empiricist's only trustworthy sources of knowledge; he arrives at conclusions by using the inductive method and basing conclusions on what is observed.

Because he limited his observations to behavior, Skinner did not see evidence of a separate entity in human beings called a mind or a soul, or a concept of self. Skinner defined an inner concept such as self in terms of behavior, calling it a "functionally unified system of responses."[12] He says that, "...inner events have no special properties just because they occur under the skin."[13] They are bound by the same laws of behavior; there is no mind-body dualism here, for man is considered to be the same kind of substance inside and out.

Compatible with scientific materialism, Skinner's work reflects the idea that everything which exists now is the result of factors and conditions which existed before, and everything which will exist in the future must develop from some combination or change in the present factors and conditions.[14] As he says in *Science and Human Behavior*:

> What a man does is the result of specifiable conditions, including genetic make-up and past history of reinforcement and once these have been discovered, we can anticipate and to some extent determine his actions... We can assume that no behavior is free. When all relevant variables have been arrangeed, an organism will or will not respond... If it can it will.'[15]

To this I will add that to Skinner, a human being is a locus, a place in which behavior occurs, subject to laws of cause and effect similar to those governing the physical universe. This is a mechanistic view of human beings, who - to Skinner - are highly complex, creative machines; all cause or power comes from without. This is Skinner's behaviorism - the only way in which a scientific materialist or mechanist would study human beings.

Why did Skinner, the behaviorist, want to study human beings? - because, he said, we have discovered the tools of war and destruction and have substantially increased our knowledge of how the world works, but we have very little clear, irrefutable information on how and why humans behave. In 1953, he said that human behavior governs massive scientific experiments, and - if we are to continue as a planet - we must be able to control human behavior as we do atoms. If we don't predict and control human behavior, Skinner feared, we will be faced with famine, overpopulation, and - possibly - atomic war.[16]

Skinner saw that there was a resistance to this because so many of our ideas of human nature are bound up in beliefs about ourselves. In our language, Skinner says, "...we have no clear way of describing human behavior that is not tied up in conjecture and prejudice."[17] Skinner saw a need for facts, laws, and a science of human behavior. Here is a man who is spending a lifetime studying behavior, using a specific laboratory method - a sharp, rather narrow perspective. In light of this, what contribution has he made to the question of learning? of teaching? of schooling?

FOOTNOTES

1. Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1953), p. 5.
2. Ibid., p. 53.
3. Ibid., P. 592
4. Ibid., p. 60.
5. Ibid., p. 66.
6. Ibid., p. 103.
7. Ibid., p. 84.
8. Ibid., p. 90.
9. Ibid., p. 91.
10. Ibid., p. 92.
11. Ibid., p. 108.
12. Ibid., p. 285.
13. Ibid., p. 459.
14. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

15. B.F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (New York: Knopf, 1971).

16. B.F. Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior*, pp. 4-5.

17. B.F. Skinner, *Cumulative Record*, 'Science of Learning' (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Press, R. Eliot, Editor), p. 53.

Part 2. What Is the Relationship between Operant Conditioning and Learning?

Since Skinner's focus on behavior leads him to a position where he deals exclusively with observable data, his definition of learning centers around how it appears in behavioral terms. According to Skinner and most behaviorists, learning has occurred

when there is a change in behavior not attributable to growth or maturation alone, but to reinforcement contingencies. It is not worthwhile, he says, to deal with explanations of learning which view it as an inner process; inner processes are not observable and are - therefore - nonfunctional and irrelevant in a behavioral analysis.

Skinner has also written that the term 'learning' can be used to describe the reassortment of responses in a complex situation.[1] This description could mean that newly acquired responses have to come under the control of new variables in order to be called learning. Response behavior induced by a stimulus, however, is not necessarily learning.

> By "priming behavior. . . telling a student how or what to do through verbal instruction - we evoke (stimulate) a certain response with the help of behavior patterns already established. Skinner reminds us that we should not mistake simple execution of behavior for learning. In short, learning takes place because behavior is reinforced, not merely because it has been primed. Learning can be said to have occurred only if the learner can make similar responses on his own."[2]

If a student learns that 9 x 9 = 81, he/she must be able to give the response in a number of different situations and over a period of time. The new variables would be reinforcements and stimuli of a different kind and intensity. If one could only respond "81" when 9 x 9 was presented in a particular way, this would not be evidence of learned behavior; it would be more like a conditioned reflex.

Skinner has said that the term "learning" is misleading, as in the statement, "The pigeon learned to stretch its neck." A better statement, in behavioral terms, is: We make a given consequence contingent on behavior and the behavior is observed to increase in frequency. This is also an example of operant conditioning - behavior being contingent on reinforcement. To a behaviorist, then, the proper term for a change in behavior due to reinforcement contingencies is not learning but operant conditioning. Skinner uses the term "learning," but means only the observable part of it. In behavioral terms, one does not learn to play the piano; one is conditioned by a series of reinforcements and stimuli to do so. A student is taught, in the sense that he is induced to engage in new forms of behavior.

Teaching, then, is a technology; teachers must possess knowledge of behavioral science and have the help of instrumentation to do their jobs effectively. They cannot wait for natural reinforcers to shape their students' behavior; students will not plant seeds because they are promptly reinforced by a harvest. An artificial reinforcement must be set up: grades, praise, peer pressure, etc. According to Skinner, a teacher who relies on natural contingencies of reinforcement gives up his/her role as teacher. To expose the student to his/her environment gives no guarantee that the student's behavior would be followed by a reinforcing event; consequently, there is no guarantee that learning has taken place.

Skinner had the idea that since human behavior was so complex and the skills to be developed in schools were so intricate, teachers would need mechanical help: "Teachers need equipment, instrumental support, for it is impossible to arrange contingencies of reinforcement without it."[3] Skinner invented teaching machines, which provided immediate reinforcement so that students could acquire new behavior efficiently and effectively.

Here are some of the basic characteristics of teaching machines:[4]

1) Each machine is located in its own cubicle so that the pupil is removed from sources of distraction.

2) Most machines have a small window through which an item of information is displayed.

3) Each display is known as a frame of a program; the student is required to read this display and respond to the question which is based on the information given in the frame.

4) When the response is given, the machine advances the program to the next frame; the student is then told whether his

previous response was correct or not, and further information and questions are to be found.

Sometimes, a specially designed book may take the place of a machine.

With teaching machines and programmed material, responses are immediately followed by reinforcing environmental consequences. Programs are constructed so that errors are rarely made and each step is small and cautious. This reflects Skinner's repeated assertion that behavior is increased in frequency by reinforcements made dependent on that behavior.

To Skinner, learning or the acquisition of new behavior - is not a trial and error process at all. Behavior changes are functions of trial and success; Skinner's experiments with animals provide strong empirical support for this assertion. Pigeons have been taught to acquire behavior which showed fine discrimination, through trial and success. Here is an example of a spelling program: the word to be learned is provided in various sentences, but with a letter missing which the student supplies; the number of missing letters is gradually increased, until - eventually - the pupil is asked to use the whole word in an appropriate sentence.

This approach may seem too easy. The belief has been that challenging tasks teach students to think. Skinner seems to think that any kind of behavior, creative or giving evidence of critical thinking, can be taught by a series of progressive programs and not through difficult assignments. A critic of Skinner's mentioned that of course these methods would work if students were motivated, and that motivation needs to be taken care of before teaching machines are used. That is, students must be reinforced to use teaching machines, and want to place themselves in situations in which learning can occur; once they are reinforced to change their behavior (to learn), most techniques work. The problem then becomes one of educational management, rather than teaching and learning. According to Skinner, however, motivation and learning are both behaviors; both can be built into the students' behavior through trial and success.

How does Skinner recommend that one build motivated behavior? - not by aversive control (negative reinforcement) or by waiting for natural reinforcers to occur. Very little real life motivation goes on in the classroom, so - according to Skinner - natural reinforcers don't work; neither do "ultimate societal reinforcers of eventual fame, money, prestige," because a child might already be reinforced to be lazy, destructive, or in search of negative attention. There are also contrived proximate reinforcers: grades, on-the-spot approval, or prizes; the values of these are questionable, and too much reinforcement loses its value. The most important reinforcers are automatic: when a sentence comes out right, when a word is read correctly; this is where the strongest motivation comes from.

But when automatic reinforcers are too frequent, they also lose their value; a pigeon will stop behavior if reinforced too much. So, says Skinner, it is the teacher's job to make relatively infrequent reinforcements effective. One way is to stretch the ratio - increase the number of responses between reinforcements as rapidly as the students' behavior permits; this intermittent reinforcement allows behavior to continue for long periods of time. Once a skill is stamped in by continuous reinforcement, the teacher should follow a schedule of reducing its frequency.

It is also possible for one to learn to arrange reinforcements in life (self-reinforcement); Skinner says that schooling has never taught self-management but that technology becomes available when the problem is understood. The boredom and lack of motivation in schools reflects contingencies; through proper understanding, we can create eager, diligent students.

According to Skinner, the process which goes on between teacher and student should be operant conditioning - the teacher controls the student's behavior. Once a subject or quality such as creativity is fully understood and can be expressed in behavioral terms, it can be taught and the behavior produced in the student through operant conditioning. To Skinner, this is the essence of teaching, learning, and education.

FOOTNOTES

1. B.F. Skinner, *The Technology of Teaching* (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts), p. 210.

2. Ibid., p. 113.

3. Ibid., pp. 22-28.

4. Ibid., p. 107.

Part 3. Skinner's Work Reflected at the Free School

Writing about where I see evidence of operant conditioning at the Free School is difficult, because it is one particular kind of interaction in an environment consisting of many varied interactions - most of them unrehearsed and unpremeditated. Many of the adult-child interactions come from the hearts of those involved; although this can sometimes be seen in behavior, to record only the behavior excludes the observation's coming from intuitive means as opposed to sight. I am, therefore, looking for evidence of operant conditioning as a part or piece of an interaction; it is as if I am looking for the brush strokes in a Rembrandt. Interactions are so complex and interwoven, that to look at just one piece of an interaction gives only a restricted amount of information.

At present, there are no interactions at the Free School which I could define as operant conditioning - a child's behavior being shaped and maintained with a schedule of reinforcement. This means establishing baseline behavior and deciding on a reinforcement schedule. I do see us using positive reinforcement and the process in which behavior is shaped by the environment; this kind of operant conditioning goes on all the time, just by the nature of our adaptability and responsiveness to the environment.

As far as positive reinforcement goes, we find what is reinforcing to each particular child, connecting with the idea that anything which is pro-life and pro-growth is reinforcing. At the Free School, the process of learning skills is considered as reinforcing as learning to talk. We believe, however, that help is needed in the transition from children's following their own inclinations to learning that there are social and physical environmental limits. In accepting these limits, the children's behavior changes; one could say, then, that the environment is shaping their behavior. In learning to talk, for example, the environment (parents, other people) shapes the behavior; that's one way to define it.

When a child goes to school, other adults (and peers) take over as reinforcers, attempting to shape the child's behavior to learn basic skills. But it is a cooperative effort between child and adult, to the extent that the behavior being reinforced is that which the child knows is good for him/her. I think that one would have to use a powerful reinforcement (such as brainwashing - a potent form of operant conditioning) to shape someone's behavior into something the person felt was wrong for him/her.

What I am saying is that the Free School uses positive reinforcement, and it works; the behavior we reinforce is good for the child, and the child has to know that on some level, in order for it to work. If you reinforce a child to sit still at a desk for most of the day, the reinforcement has to be potent, because sitting still is something neither children or adults do naturally for long periods of time (unless they are doing something which is self-reinforcing). At the Free School, we reinforce what we know is good for the child; the child tells us this by wanting to be at our school and being happy there.

If many varied attempts at teaching a child to read do not work, we confer with the parents and have the child tested. From this process, we get some new insights, and perhaps come to the realization that there might be a deep aversion to reading. We do our best to see that the child gets through this block, even if it means letting him have it for a while. We use specific positive reinforcement in a classroom if we think that it will work; we use many methods, but that is not the most important thing.

What is important is that we use our combined powers of observation, memory, intuition, and knowledge of the child's past, the interactions which go on at his/her home, the child's teacher, and the teacher's effect on that child. We also use knowledge of the peer group situation in the class, and - most importantly - what the child has to say for him/herself.

We use all of this information to make a group decision - with the entire elementary section of the school if this is appropriate - sometimes with the child having input, sometimes with the parents, and sometimes with only the teachers. Operant conditioning is one small part of what we do at the Free School; to single it out and look only for positive reinforcement or a schedule of reinforcement would make for a grossly inaccurate description of the teacher-child interactions.

We use programmed learning materials, and some of the children enjoy these. The programmed reading series works well with some children; some are bored by the slowness of the progression, while others are more reinforced by the success which is programmed into it. The children who use these materials successfully, however, are motivated to learn; any system works with motivated kids. The advantages of programmed texts are that they allow children to progress at individual speeds and to correct their own work immediately.

Another point I want to make about operant conditioning and reinforcement contingencies at the Free School is that there are behaviors we want children to have, but they vary with the particular child. It takes all that I have mentioned in the preceding paragraphs to decide what is best for each child, and - sometimes - we are still wrong. To advocate one system of looking at problems in teaching and learning, as I see Skinner doing, would be seriously detrimental to the child and to the teacher.

There are no set techniques when dealing with people; there are too many variables, and to attempt to be scientific (by reducing variables) denies the complexity of the entire process of human relations. Being "scientific" allows people to feel safe and steady in a field where risk-taking, unsteadiness, and uncertainty are part of the process.

From the viewpoint that people do what they are reinforced to do, the Free School's older children are there because they want to be. Being at the Free School is a positive reinforcement in itself - a privilege; if a child doesn't care or want to be there, we suggest that he/she go somewhere else. First, however, we do our best to find out whether this is truly the case. If a child really wants to be at the Free School, he/she will change his/her behavior in order to work cooperatively within our community.

The trick is to teach children that adapting to certain behaviors is not the same as giving away their souls or individualities. They must learn, however, that it is necessary to behave in a certain way in order to be part of a working, self-governing community. The adults working with the children must experience the effectiveness of this themselves; the important thing is to adapt and to not lose one's sense of individuality.

I see Skinner's work, then, as a small piece of what we do at the Free School - we use positive reinforcement. The school's structure is based on our being positively reinforcing for kids and adults - not in an indulgent way, but in the sense that setting limits with caring and intelligence is what children need. I believe that we answer a need similar to that for food, but it is food for the heart and mind.

We do not have to add other reinforcements such as grades and privileges, because - on a deep level - children know that we want what they want for them; if we are mistaken, they let us know! Children who are disturbed and want self-destructive things for themselves are provided with limits and caring until they begin to want positive, growth-producing experiences. The more that we at the Free School are aware of children's needs, the fewer extrinsic reinforcements we have to use.

Part 4. Criticism of Skinner's Work on Operant Conditioning and Its Relationship to Education

Skinner does not take into account the relationship between the person administering reinforcement and the one whose behavior is being shaped. To shape behavior, one must use a reinforcer which is powerful enough to affect that behavior. Children or subjects will decide to give up what they are doing or continue it, based on the effect their actions are having or on whether the outside reinforcement is stronger than the inner one. For the reinforcement to be strong enough, an experimenter must, to a certain extent, be in control of a subject's life; the experimenter can provide rewards which the subject cannot procure for him/herself.

An outdoor stroll can be a reinforcement to someone with limited access to the outdoors; an hour of free play can be a bonus if free play is restricted. For operant conditioning to work well, freedom, in a sense, must be restricted. When someone gives rewards, he/she is saying: I have the power to make what you are doing worthwhile or not; I control your experience at this particular time. Operant conditioning is powerful; it will work if the experimenter or teacher creates a state of deprivation.

Skinner's entire focus was to study behavior through what he called a scientific perspective; this entailed dealing only with observable data this was *all* he saw. He redefined human beings in terms of their behavior; it is a narrow way of looking at things, and I think he sacrificed much by insisting on hard facts. As Henri Poincaré says, "Pure empiricism does not make science more rigorous: rather it makes it less adequate. A mere collection of facts is no more a science than a pile of bricks a house."[1].

Skinner's idea was that learning is based on trial and success - not trial and error; in this way, an outside source chooses what is successful and reinforces it. m e student does not or is not encouraged to figure out for him/herself whether he/she is right. How can a person whose behavior is shaped by another develop his/her own powers of discrimination? Can this power be programmed as well? Skinner says yes, but it has yet to be done. Without failure, how can we recognize our own successes? I think that operant conditioning inhibits the discriminatory process, as one becomes dependent on an outside source to judge the correctness of an experience or a learning situation.

I think that Skinner had the right idea about how human nature works: people do things because they are reinforced to do so. But Skinner's idea to use this information to control people seems a dangerous perversion of a natural process (the end does not justify the means), especially when dealing with human beings. There is something awesome about exerting power over an external event; if one looks at what this does to the relationships involved, one can see some of the ill effects.

This is not a simple issue, because man has exerted control over natural events for some time now, and we have yet to see the entirety of this process' ill effects. Once these are made clear, we can balance out the good and the bad which have come from technology (if, by then, it is not too late because the effects are irreversible). If, perhaps, in the face of our own power we are continually awestruck and humbled by nature's power and beauty, and by ourselves - and if we recognize a power greater than ourselves - bad things won't happen. I do not think, however, that the solution is that simple; I think that it will have something to do with the ways we learn and use our intelligence.

If one looks at education today, one sees that its institutions are based on outer control instead of on helping its students to develop inner control. One begins to see that we are training our young to continue to make these same mistakes by looking for someone or something to control and shape, because they have been controlled and shaped. Is this a context for learning? Skinner's concept of education is hierarchical and not cooperative; it is based not on people helping each other to learn but on one person deciding which behavior is appropriate for another. The people involved are not truly being with each other; the relationship is mechanical, having no heart and leading to more control.

In the next part of my paper, I will discuss the work of John Dewey, who sees education as a cooperative social process. Dewey observes the empirical evidence, but looks at relationships and the context of things. He does not see education as a technique; but as an integral part of life.

FOOTNOTES

1. Irving E. Sigel, D. Erodzinsky, R. Golinkoff, Lawrence Erlbawn, Editors, *New Directions in Piagetian m Theory and Practice* (Hillsdale, New Jersey: 1981), p. 158.

Chapter III. Dewey
Part 1. His Theory

Born in Burlington, Vermont in 1859, John Dewey is considered one of America's most influential philosophers and educators. Upon graduating from the University of Vermont, he taught elementary and high school; after that, he received a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University. From his early training in philosophy, he went on to interests in education, proceeding to teach at various universities. He became a faculty member of the University of Chicago and participated in founding a famous laboratory school, experimenting with various methods of instruction and education. From 1904 to 1930, Dewey taught at Columbia University's Teachers College.

When Dewey died in 1952, he had gained an international reputation for his pragmatic approach to philosophy, social ethics, logic, knowledge theory, esthetics, metaphysics, and education. His bibliography of all publications covers 150 pages, with a few of his most important books being: *How We Think* (1933), *Reconstruction and Philosophy* (1920), *Experience and Nature* (1926), *Logic and the Theory of Inquiry* (1930), *Democracy and* Education (1955), and *Art as Experience* (1935).

Dewey had a tremendous influence on philosophy; some consider him the best-known educator of this century. He believed in the unity of theory and practice, of thought and action. He opposed the traditional method of learning, where the student memorizes the accumulated knowledge in books.

He believed that learning should relate to the student's concerns, including knowledge of past and present; this should connect with the student's experiences when he/she is in a social situation. Dewey did not believe that knowledge could be attained by indoctrination or contemplation alone.

Dewey also believed that philosophy should be related to everyday life, and that its true function was to help solve human problems - not merely to formulate theories. Some say this was Dewey's greatest contribution - that he used philosophy to try to help solve education's problems, and to better humanity's lot throughout the world.

The function of Dewey's philosophy was to solve problems not merely theoretically but practically as well - this is his pragmatism. According to Dewey, theories should constantly be tested in practice - not through statistics or surveys but through the reality of common social, interactive experiences. In most academic traditions, Dewey saw that theory was far removed from practice.

Dewey saw the necessity of overcoming the duality of theory and practice (and many others as well: mind/body, natural/supernatural, body/soul, and work/play), because he believed that this prevented people from feeling vitality and unity in their everyday lives. Many people find no joy in work; their play is often self-destructive and escapist. In education, he was especially aware that those who formulate theory had no direct communication with those who practice it. Theories were not developed out of practice and tested in practice.

Dewey saw that dualisms were deeply imbedded in our culture; our bodies were seen to be antagonists of our souls, and our minds seem to come from different places than the matter of this earth: "We seem at times to live in a world of opposites, where work and responsibility for most people are separated from pleasure and fun."[1] Can one be spiritual and materialistic at the same time, experience the constructive within the destructive and tenderness in strength? Dualisms seem to be built into our language.

How did Dewey come to see his way past these dualisms? Dewey has, at times, been called a process philosopher; he saw the world and life through the process of experience - not subjective experience (e.g., "My experience is...") but a concrete level of social interaction in which humans probe and test reality.[2] It is a means of discovering nature and does not get in the way of perceiving nature; people have claimed that subjectivity will blur perception.

We have the idea that we must be "objective," standing outside ourselves to see what's happening. Dewey says, however, that "experience is a means of penetrating further into the heart of nature."[3] It is neither subjective or objective but a combination of both; it is not just what is happening out there but within us as well. Experience is the continually occurring interaction of inner and outer worlds; it is, for Dewey, the combination of sensory impressions, reason, and intuition. Using these qualities together is the stuff of scientific inquiry.

What about the ideal world - the images of God, truth, values, and our sense of wholeness? Dewey says we come to these ideas through our experience of the world; we do not form them in our minds prior to experience.

Primary experience gives us our grasp of concrete events; secondary experience helps us to link primary experiences together and give them meaning, seeing in them patterns and relationships. Dewey criticizes traditional philosophy as being stuck in theorizing and reflection and not testing these theories in real life experiences.[4] He said that philosophy turns people off because it doesn't deal with problems which can be solved in our everyday experience, nor does it illuminate primary experience. Sometimes, it only gives rise to puzzles which are solved by disparaging ordinary experience and calling it mere sensory impressions.

Here, Dewey said, is the test of philosophy. Does the thought end in making our lives more meaningful? Does it enrich day-to-day experience? People suffer, enjoy, desire, see, believe. This experience should be illuminated through philosophy - it should not be downgraded.[5]

"The transcendental philosopher has probably done more than the professed sensualist and materialist to obscure the potentialities of daily experience for joy and for self-regulation." Dewey says that if what he has written in *Experience and Nature* has no other result "than creating and promoting a respect for concrete human experience and its potentialities,"[6] he will be content.

Experience is rich; thought is secondary. Experience includes both definite and indefinite, predictable and unpredictable. Our tendency, says Dewey, is to deny the existence of chance and the unknown, and to jump to a magical safeguard of universal law: 'We have heaped comfort between ourselves and the risks of the world.'[7] The amusement business and drugs are all to escape and forget, but all things are intertwined. Change gives meaning to permanence; only a living world can include death.

Dewey says that philosophers, in their rush for wholeness and safety, broke the world into parts in order to put it into a unified whole. They put the particular, and change, into a realm of its own and called this a dialectical problem; they substituted this problem for the real problems which come from the union of the variable and the constant. m is need for the stable and the fixed leads to a philosophy in which existence becomes what we wish it to be, as opposed to what it is.

We look to the supernatural or spiritual as being more important; people begin trying to experience the infinite without getting involved in the labor and pain of life's finite conditions. Dewey says, however, that true satisfaction comes from the union of hazardous and stable, predictable and unpredictable. It is this mixture which sets us on our quest for wisdom; but, too often, we bypass true wisdom in looking for *the* way, and *the* answer. Dewey advised us to keep in mind that there would be no completions without incompletions; without uncertainty, there would be no certainty. Nature generates uncertainty: one must be conscious of the intersection of the problematic and determinate things and be intelligently experimental, so that one can profit by this instead of being at its mercy.

By 'intelligently experimental,' Dewey means that we should use our reason, intuition, and sensory experiences. From these experiences and our interaction with the world, we develop theories about the world; according to Dewey, however, we should test them in reality. He advises us to go from reality and practice to theory, and back to reality again! This, he says, leads to enriched experience.

Dewey deals with the entrenched dualism of Western civilization, mind, and matter. He says that they are both different characters of natural events, coming from being on this earth. Many believe that the mind exists before experience, that it is part of God or a world other than what we perceive through our senses. Dewey connects them by saying that matter is the order of things and mind places meanings and connections on matter; both are functional, non-static, and part of the world.[8]

Dewey believes, therefore, that love of wisdom and learning should lead to an opening and enlarging of man's ways. It should not lead to dualisms, opposites, and trying to balance and compare them. We can see the world and life without focusing on polarities, by being immersed in experience and by continually testing our beliefs and theories.

There are two phases of human experience: consummatory (ends in themselves, peaks, direct enjoyment, celebrating) and instrumental, preparatory experiences (means, discovery, invention, labor, working toward[9]). Somewhere in history, ends were seen as final - as in liberal arts; some leisure class members enjoyed these experiences, while means were seen as menial, lower-class, practical arts. This was the foundation for the division of theory and practice; theoretical knowledge became associated with truth and completion, becoming separated from trial, work, and manipulation.

Dewey said, however, that as we set about investigating a problem, ends become more concrete. One does not begin with a solid end in mind and set about building towards it; ends develop out of means, and further ends develop out of the ends in cyclical motion. Theories are developed out of practice and are then tested and proved viable or not; practice comes first. We are brought up to take on theory first - someone else's ideas and look for examples in reality. It has been said that when we look for something in an experiment, we often find what we are looking for; our presuppositions have an effect on what we see in reality.

Piaget's theories are a case in point - people took them as ends and set up situations to prove or disprove them. Piaget saw his theories as continually opening more questions, and as means; in this respect, he might have agreed with Dewey. People didn't generally use his means - a method of exploring a child's mind through an intuitive form of questioning - to discover things for themselves. Students have been taught to disregard their experience, and to take on or prove another's ideas. Problems which they want to investigate should be theirs, coming from their own experience of the world and from practice. According to Dewey, first comes practice and then theory (which is put to test in practice); this, in turn, generates more theory. It is not a static thing - it is a process.[10]

FOOTNOTES

[1] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1955), pp. 239-41.

[2] John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (Chicago and London: Open Court Publishing Company, 1926), pp. 1-9.

[3] Ibid., preface, p. iii.

[4] Joseph Ratner, *Intelligence in the Modern World; John Dewey's Philosophy* (New York: The Modern Library), p. 229.

[5] Ibid., p. 8.

[6] John Dewey, op. cit., p. 39.

[7] Ibid., p. 44 .

[8] Ibid., P- 74

[9] Ibid., pp. 78-84.

[10] J. Ratner, op. cit., p. 116.

Part 2. Dewey, Communications, and How This Relates to His Ideas on Experience, Experimentalism, and Bringing Together Dualistic Views

"Of all affairs communication is most wonderful."[1]

For Dewey, communication is both consummatory and instrumental - an end in itself and a joy. It is also a means of expressing ideas, and the bridge between existence and essence; the essence of something does not come into existence unless it is communicated to some being. If communication did not exist, what would the world be like? It would be pure existence - there is no meaning unless it can be communicated to some other being. Dewey said that the mind emerges through speech[2] and the ability to communicate. One cannot talk to oneself until one speaks to others.

Man is so much a social animal that communication can and should be a vital force in our lives; for most people, however, it has a machine-like quality, where results are important but no attention is paid to the intellects and emotions of those involved. If communication is just one way, as in the handing down of directives, it becomes depersonalizing; if it is just a means, one does not take into account the consummatory aspects of the transaction as an end in itself - as a joyful and enriching experience.

If speech is only consummatory, it is just silliness, and - according to Dewey - luxurious and corrupting; speech must have a purpose as well. Dewey says that true communication has the instrumental use of reassurance, of giving the other a sense of "this is who I am and this is who you are to me." It has the consummatory good of an enhanced sense of membership and relationship in a social sense.

How does one communicate his or her experience in such a way as to create all of this? Dewey says to try to experiment by communicating some experience to another, and you'll find your attitude toward that experience changing. In order to communicate an experience, one must get outside of it and formulate it; one must see the experience as another would, consider how it relates to the life of the other so that he/she can appreciate the meaning of the experience.

To assimilate part of another's experience, one has to be open enough to tell him/her of one's own in an interactive process. In us, communication is like art[3]; it is educative, because to receive or to put forth communication is to have an enlarged or changed experience. It also creates a responsibility for accuracy and clarity of statement and thought.[4]

Communication seen in this way dissolves polarities; it is an opening process, not an argumentative or divisive one. We live in the world and have experiences when we use our senses, our reason, and our intuition. We discover more about this world by experimenting and then trying things out again, continually practicing, theorizing, practicing again, and on and on. Babies and children do this; this is how they learn, developing their ideas about the world through their own activity. Scientists do this (or, at least, they should). This activity occurs in a social context, through communication, which gives it meaning in the world. Dewey is continually bringing everything back to the context of our everyday lives.

Intelligence, reason, sense perception, and intuition can be used in everyday life; wisdom, then, is not just the philosopher's domain. In this way, one is open to having experiences which are rich, and full of wonder, chance and uncertainty, and risk and safety. One experiences the wholeness of life, not the bits and pieces of existence which come from one's fear of seeing the world as it really is, here and now. This is an expansive act, however, and to define oneself within closed limits as the private subjective self does, presents - says Dewey - the "ultimate dialectic of the universal and the individual."[5] This can be the place where this powerful dualism originates.

The solution to this problem is, in Dewey's eloquent style, "... a formulated acceptance of oscillation between surrender to the external and assertion of the inner."[6] Dewey sees this happening in science and art and in communication. One's inner subjective world can manifest itself through innovations and deviations which affect institutions and the objective world, promoting communication and understanding. In this respect, the limiting and the expansive reach a harmony.

Dewey further illuminates this idea by saying that the individual can either be in harmony with the outside world's events (the world satisfies his/her needs) or can find a gap between its bias and the environment supporting its needs. The individual who feels harmony extends as far as the equilibrium of the world. The individual who finds a gap can, Dewey says, either conform, become a "parasitical subordinate, indulge in egotistical solitude, or set out to change the conditions to conform to its needs."[7]

In this latter process, says Dewey, intelligence is born - not the mind which enjoys being part of the whole but the individualized mind which initiates, adventures, and experiments. He says that one can either be satisfied with one's world (but that leaves one subject to inevitable change anyway, as things tend to do), or can be out there remaking, inventing, risking, and learning. The old world has to be forsaken before the new one can be discovered; this is an adventure.

Identification of the bias and preference of selfhood with the process of intelligent remaking achieves an indestructible union of the instrumental and the final.[8]

Means and ends are joined. Experimenting with the world, seeing the world in its potentiality and actuality, allows one to let go of dualisms. Dewey says that once we get involved in causal relationships, we develop hierarchies and begin to break the world into bits and pieces. Dewey does not see cause and effect as a one-way relationship. He sees human beings acting on the world, and changing it; by this process, they too are changed. It is a cyclical process - it is growth - it is life.

FOOTNOTES

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[1] John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, p. 166.

[2] Ibid., p. 170.

[3] Ibid., p. 7.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid, p. 244.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., p. 245.

[8] Ibid., p. 246.

Part 3. Dewey's Views on Education, and How They Come from His Philosophy of Experimentalism, Experience, and Interconnectedness

Dewey begins *Democracy and Education* by talking about education as a necessity of life. A living thing survives by using energies which act upon it to further its own existence; when an inanimate object is struck by a superior force, it survives by pure resistance or breaks into pieces. A living thing interacts with and uses energy, air, moisture, and soil for its own renewal: "Life is a self renewing process through action on the environment."[1] If a living thing can't use the energy acting upon it, it dies.

By "life," Dewey means not only physical life, but also social life: people's customs, institutions, and leisure; the same principle of continuity applies here. Beliefs and experiences are passed on through interaction; society renews itself through transmission and communication of ideas and values. Dewey sees schools as places in which this continuity of life takes place; he says that schools are not a preparation for life - they are life. The activity which goes on in schools should be the same as life outside school, except that the quality of the experiences is more organized and geared towards transmitting values and knowledge, good habits of thinking, and all that is valuable in a democratic society.

Dewey sees this continuity broken and criticizes traditional education for it, both in the difference in activity of a child's life outside school and in the school's subject matter and atmosphere. The experiences children are having are not vital and important to them. Dewey sees the social medium as educative; children pick up the group's ideas and values unconsciously through activity within that group, in families and in schools.

"One's powers of observation, recollection and imagination do not work spontaneously but are set in motion by current social occupations."[2] What effect does the mood of a place have? Do its occupations engender curiosity? intolerance? thinking? Many habits and ways of thinking are formed in the constant give and take of relationships with others, and this is what educators should pay attention to.

Attitudes and dispositions are formed not by direct conveyance of beliefs, emotions, and knowledge, but by the school's atmosphere and the quality of relationships there. Children learn a school's values through common activity. Dewey said that we never educate directly; rather, we do so indirectly, through the environment's means. Morals and values cannot be indoctrinated - the social environment is the teacher.

Next, Dewey deals with education and direction. When we are most conscious of actions which control others' actions through approval, disapproval, and rewards, we tend to exaggerate the importance of this control at the expense of a more effective, permanent method. The control lies in the nature of the situation. In social situations, the actions of the young have to fit in with what others are doing.

Self-discipline is formed through experiences in which one cares enough about the activity to make it work,and knows the effects of his/her actions on the activity. Dewey said that forming this internal control is the business of education; otherwise, we are just training children to perform acts which have no meaning to them - just as we train a horse to jump.

According to Dewey, you cannot force someone to do something which he/ she does not already intend to do; a stimulus cannot control a response. "... the stimulus is but a fulfillment of the proper function of the organ, not an outside interruption."[3] To some extent, says Dewey, all direction or control is a guiding of activity to its own end.

Lastly, Dewey looks at education as growth He has a respect for immaturity, for having the potential for growth; he sees education as development, and development is life. He says, therefore, that the educative process has no end beyond itself; it is a process of continual reorganizing, reconstructing, and transforming. Dewey says that the final purpose of schooling is to insure continued growth through life, learning from the world. This does not mean, however, that he ignores the importance of learning basic skills and learning from the past. He values these as necessary tools for learning and growth, but not as ends in themselves.

In school, one must organize one's powers in order to learn from the environment. Immaturity is not a lack of desired traits; adults need not to pour information into children's heads for five hours/day but to supply the conditions for growth Dewey says, emphatically, "keep the child's nature and arm it in the very direction in which it points."[4] One can judge education to the extent to which it creates a desire for continued growth.

Dewey sees traditional education as failing to do this. He sees much of education as working not towards growth, but towards a static end - a 'preparation for life' kind of attitude. He says that education is life, and that all this preparation depreciates what is happening in the present. Very often, schools choose aims and goals for the student, and even for the teacher, so that neither exercises his/her own intelligence but follows the goals of others. Children are passive in their learning in such schools. Dewey says that we must realize the significance of each person's growing experience; to place external goals on this is to lack respect for growth.

According to Dewey, children should learn to think in school. When you teach children to think, you educate them; to do this, you must start from an activity in which children are interested. If a genuine problem develops out of a child's activity, the teacher's job is to help him/her develop the habits of making observations and gathering information. The teacher's role is to make sure that when solutions occur to the child, he/she is given the opportunity to test them, and to discover for him/herself whether they are valid. This is Dewey's experimentalism; it is the way in which we learn about the world and effect changes in it.

Dewey sees dualisms underlying many aspects of education, play and work, and means and ends (traditional education is seen as a means; Dewey sees it as both). Bringing means and end together in one activity brings together play and work, and work becomes fun - both consummatory and final.

I see Dewey as seeking a philosophy which reflects and enhances life, rather than deadening it by splitting mind and body, work and play. He saw education as a place in which children were learning to deaden their minds and hearts from well-meaning adults who were just as deadened, emotionally and intellectually. Dewey's works inspired some changes in education, but people largely misinterpreted his ideas to mean freedom and license for children.They thought that children should be allowed to do as they pleased, and this was just as mindless as what had gone on before.

What Dewey is asking us to do is rigorous and takes clear thinking; one of his major points is that living should mean experimenting within a context, within relationships, and with an open heart and mind. Practice comes first, being in the context of one's own activity; from that, a problem naturally arises. One then sets out to solve it by trying solutions and checking back to see whether they work. It is Dewey's experimentalism, combined with experience, reason, sense, and intuition - in the context of social living - which form his basis for cutting through dualisms. This is also the basis for intelligent, enhanced, and joyful living and for education; they are the same thing.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, p. 2.

[2] Ibid., p. 20.

[3] Ibid., p. 29.

[4] Ibid., p. 62.

Part 4. Where I See Dewey's Philosophy at the Free School

The Free School is a community in the center of a larger one. Most of the teachers and some of the students live within a block of the school in a kind of inner city village, which is committed to fostering emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth in each other. m e center of the community is a growth group of twenty members which has been meeting for nine years; it consists of most of the teachers, some parents, and a former student. All of the adults at the school have made a commitment to grow on some level in their ability to love, trust, enjoy, be creative, nurture, and be responsible. From this context, the adults at the Free School create a space for themselves and the children which fosters growth.

We also pay much attention to the relationships among adults, between adults and children, and among children. Here is where children learn to live and work together in a community with common goals. Order comes from common goals which are cared about by all; no child is forced to be there but, rather, chooses to be there. Teachers are there because we want to be; our salaries are relatively low, so the rewards of being at the Free School come from working with children and each other. In this way, in Dewey's terms, labor and leisure come together.

Problems arise from the social's group's activity, and we support children to solve these problems constructively. There is the council meeting system which I mentioned earlier, in which each child and adult in the elementary part of the school has an equal voice in making rules, deciding policy, and helping to solve problems.

We have regular structured classes in the morning at the Free School. The children discuss with their homeroom teacher what they are going to do each day. It is not the method or outward structure which is important, however, but the relationships. In the context of relationships built on mutual trust and respect, the adults can guide children toward enriching, growing experiences. The basic processes at the school are interaction and communication. We recognize that children learn from each other and from their interaction with adults. The subject matter comes from the students' experiences; it is real, vital, and continuous with their pursuits. Dewey refutes the notion that the mind is something complete in itself and just needs to be applied to ready-made objects and topics for knowledge to result. He says over and over again that true knowledge comes from activity which is generated from deep interest and activity which is the child's own. This can be learning to read, writing a story, or doing math.

At the Free School, we have learned to let this learning of "basic skills" be the child's process, with us as guides. It can be in a traditional context (basal readers, skillbooks) or in the context of a special interest: the desert, the old times, animals, putting a newspaper together, etc. Either way, upon observing children at work at our school, one has the sense that they are intensely interested in what they are doing.

Being with children for over fourteen years, we have learned from them and from each other how to create a teaching and learning situation which is enriching for both adult and child, based on mutual respect and recognition of the roles involved. Out of this combination of the students' interests with adult guidance, subject matter is formed. Our belief is that learning how to read, write, and do math are exciting processes - more of a challenge for some than others, but a vital process nonetheless. Learning is the children's process; it is not a matter of performance for adults, for grades, or for approval.

At the Free School, children take an active role in their own research - learning and knowledge are not spoon-fed. We are continually coming from practice to theory and back to practice again. I did not do the experiment of trying out a specific theory at the school, because I am experimenting and rechecking to see whether what I do works most of the time. Problems arise naturally out of activity; possible solutions are thought of and some are carried out. This is a social process, where - if a problem arises - it is talked about with other adults and children, if appropriate. We don't have techniques and methods passed down from administrators; we notice what doesn't work and we change it.

The Free School is a place in which children and adults act intelligently; knowledge develops from this. There is no break between practice and theory, between subject matter and what is important in the lives of students and teachers. We sometimes meet and talk about what it feels like to have parents separate (generated by a student's having discussed it in class) or about nuclear war (because of what children have heard or because it is a deep interest of one teacher's).

We have rabbits and one dies; it is dissected, and those who want to participate do. We haul wood into the furnace room and talk about fire. A boy invites only boys to his birthday party, and the girls talk about their hurt feelings. We talk about prejudice and how one's actions can affect other's feelings. A child comes to the Free School with an interest in electricity and he pursues it.

Every month, the elementary children spend a week at a farm in the Berkshires, maple sugaring, trailblazing, learning about farm life, and learning to live together. Dewey has often said that education is a social process, that intellectual organization is not an end in itself but a means by which human ties and bonds may be understood.[1]

This is education based on living experience, and it is made possible by adults who are willing to live with life's uncertainties, take risks, and see life in its actuality and potentiality; by adults who are willing to expand into possibility and stay centered; by adults who are able to experience group and individual tensions and accept them as life - joyous and exciting. The Free School is not a rigid, dead place like so many schools today which are split off from life and the pursuit of heartfelt interests.

The adults at the school have steadily been learning to be more open to themselves and to each other and to be in deeper contact with life, through using gestalt, bioenergetics, transactional analysis, and the option process. In a way, we've all been on a spiritual path - one which is individual but which involves the group as well; our journey is grounded in everyday living and working together.

As we begin to see our own magnificence, we can create the space for the children to experience theirs and thrive! I see John Dewey's philosophy very much in evidence in our community - in our commitment to each other as a group, and in our willingness to risk, experiment, and learn from each other and to use our hearts, minds, and bodies at every possible moment to experience life's richness.

My only criticism of John Dewey is that his writing is difficult to read, and thus easily misinterpreted, as it has been by people in progressive education. These people thought that learning from experience meant disregarding structure, limits, and traditional subject matter. Especially in *Experience and Education*, however, Dewey says that there can be structure and limits in experience and that past knowledge and traditional subjects (history, philosophy, and literature) illuminate and enhance our experience. On the other hand, I found his style to be a challenge - it was as if I had to scale a wall in order to fully experience this man's wisdom.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Dewey, *Education and Experience* (New York: Collier Books), p. 83.

Chapter IV. Conclusion

Piaget came to his work with an idea about growth from his experiences in biology and the effects of environment on development. He listened and observed carefully, gathering evidence for a theory of an inner process of intellectual development. To me, Piaget is a naturalist, looking with wonder at children, interacting with them, and trying different experiments to see the reaction. Piaget tries a stimulus and notes the response, stating that a child would not respond unless he/she had the capability to do so.

It seems to me that Piaget was investigating a process for which he had much respect. He looked deeply into children's minds and, from what he learned, wrote criticisms of how children are dealt with in schools; this helped him develop some solutions. But education was not his major focus; he was a scientist first, focusing on an inner, subjective world, with his theory coming from his work.

Skinner approaches teaching and learning from the viewpoint of a laboratory scientist, focusing on an outer, objective world. He was empirical, willing not to infer but to record observations about what he experienced through his senses. But Skinner was not content to just observe, because he wasn't interested in natural habitats; he was interested in controlling and predicting, as one does with laboratory experiments.

I don't know whether Skinner realized that he was looking at something which had its own life and integrity. He felt that human beings - if left on their own - would destroy the planet. This might be true, but his solution was to control. He saw that all behavior was controlled by reinforcements, and thought that it was a good idea to have everything up front and conscious. Skinner did not have much faith in people's abilities to regulate their own reinforcements without same sort of outer control.

Skinner's method was to take an organism from its natural environment, reduce the variables, isolate behavior, control it, and make predictions. More and more, however, we are seeing that taking something in isolation and looking at bits and pieces of behavior is a dead end. The new physics tells us that it is not possible to observe something without changing it in some way.[1] Perhaps I can say that Skinner was too analytical, totally looking at cause and effect instead of seeing larger patterns.

Skinner did not see living things as having their own paths. His lack of respect for his subjects is what concerns me about the use of behavior modification in schools. It is dehumanizing, in that it robs those using it and being used by it of their trust and sense of wonder in each other. Piaget had a sense of awe and wonder when he worked with children; Skinner had none. Wonder cannot be experienced through the rational, analytical part of us; we feel it through our intuitive ability.

Dewey comes from a deep philosophical and practical tradition, bringing empirical facts and the inner subjective world together in his concept of experience. He saw the analytical and the intuitive, looking at the wholeness of things and at life in its richest meaning; he saw the outer objective world and the inner subjective one as intimately bound together.

A human being, according to Dewey, is not an isolated, growing being, but a profoundly social being whose life is intertwined with others. Our socialness makes us what we are. He looks at the whole of human nature, then at how education fits into this. It cannot be alien to life, because it is the way in which many of life's traditions are passed on.

When Dewey looked at schools, however, he saw them as they are - huge buildings, holding six hundred or more children stuffed into chairs and being fed ready-made knowledge for rewards and punishments. Dewey saw traditional education as having little respect for inner process, social interactions, and the development of real intelligence. How does this relate to life?

Piaget, Skinner, and Dewey are critical of education. I prefer Dewey's solution, which is not to borrow ideas and apply them, but to think intelligently of one's own solutions coming from one's own practice, from *being there* in day-to-day reality. For some reason, being there is not easy for teachers who are taught theory before they practice. In our society, we find safety in someone else's ideas. Dewey said that we create our universe to fit our beliefs, instead of seeing what's out there with awe and wonder at its variability and permanence. We should experiment and change what we can, accept what we cannot change, and change ourselves in the process; this way of being takes courage.

There are no easy answers for teaching and learning - these form a way of life, and are not something picked up at a workshop or done five hours a day, with breaks in the teachers' lounge. The processes of teaching and learning constitute a clearheaded way of being, and until teachers are willing to discover this way, we will have schools devoid of the excitement of living. So I end this paper with a clearer idea of the educative process, and what it takes to be part of it. It is a challenge and a joy.

FOOTNOTES

[1] John Dewey *Experience and Nature*, p. 73

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A COMPARISON OF HOME SCHOOLING AND CONVENTIONAL SCHOOLING: WITH A FOCUS ON LEARNER OUTCOMES

by Brian D. Ray

Introduction

A renascence of the home as the center of learning for youth has occurred recently in the United States. There is now a visible and sizeable group of people who are known as unschoolers, deschoolers, or, more commonly, home schoolers. Whereas prior to the 20th century "...American children attended small common schools for only a few weeks each year, with the attendance beginning at some point between the ages of 8 and 12" (Moore, 1985, p. 63), most children now begin attending instructions at about age six for nearly nine months per year. This is changing for many, however. Estimates of numbers of home schooling families range from 10,000 to 50,000 (McCurdy, 1985) to one million (Hewitt Research Foundation, 1986b). The number and dedication of parents and children involved in this form of learning has caused local and state departments of education, teachers, legislators, sociologists, and expert educators to take notice. Their interests and concerns include the topics of diminishing jobs for teachers, compulsory education laws (Lines, 1982, 1983; Whitehead & Bird, 1984; Altman, 1985; Wendel, 1985), less income for school districts, and quality education (Franzosa, 1984) which encompasses the cognitive, affective (Western Australia Department of Education, 1979; Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction (WSSPI), 1985; Tizard & Hughes, 1984), and psychomotor domains. All of these issues are legitimate in the minds of those who hold them as important. However, the purpose of this paper is not to render quiescent all of the debates regarding the above issues.

Purpose

The purpose of this literature study is to compare home schooling and conventional schooling; with a focus on student outcomes. The following topics will be discussed in this paper:

1. definition of terms,
2. characteristics of home schools,
3. home school learner outcomes,
4. summary based on available evidence, and
5. potential areas of related research.

Definition of Terms

Since the practice of home schooling has experienced a strong renewal only in the present decade, there is not a large body of literature related to it. About 85% of the literature closely related to this investigation was published in the 80's. With the recent nature of the phenomenon and relatively few integrating papers on the topic, it is understandable that there is no set definition of home schooling. Taylor (1986) defined home schooling as "A teaching situation wherein children learn in the home in lieu of a conventional school. The parents, tutors, or guardians assume the direct responsibility for the education of their child" (p. 14). Similar definitions occur in studies such as Linden (1983) and Altman (1985). This definition can be altered to make it somewhat broader. For the purpose of this study, the definitions that follow apply.

Home schooling. A learning/teaching situation wherein children spend the majority of the conventional school day in or near their home in lieu of attendance at a conventional institution of education. Parents or guardians are the prime educators of their children.

Conventional schooling. The customary U. S. learning/teaching situation wherein children spend the majority of the day in an educational institution (public or private). People other than parents or guardians are the prime educators of the children during the school day.

Now that the basic terms have been defined, the general characteristics of home schools will be delineated based upon the findings of five studies.

Characteristics of Home Schools

Gustavsen

With the hope of revealing elements which contribute to successful home teaching, Gustavsen (1981) conducted a descriptive and analytical study that attempted to characterize home schools and the parents who operate them. He developed a 63-item survey instrument that included Likert-type responses about the home school, and other items related to demographic information which was completed by home school parents. Surveys were mailed to families in 44 states. Two hundred twenty-one, a 70.8% return rate, were returned by the cutoff date. The researcher said that they were then coded as usable or nonusable, but he did not indicate how many were usable.

Frequency distributions and measures of central tendency were appropriately used to report the findings. Gustavsen found that the typical home school had the following characteristics:

1. The female parent was mother/housewife/homemaker.
2. The male parent was a professional or skilled worker.
3. The parents had one to three years of college education, and 46% had attended four years of college or had done graduate work.

4. The median household income was $15,000-$20,000.
5. Various religious backgrounds were represented, including some very untraditional ones; with 64% regularly attending religious services.
6. Parents were average socializers.
7. It was a family enterprise, usually operated by both parents.
8. An average of two children and two adults were in each household.
9. They were most common (53%0 in rural and small town situations.
10. Informal, child-centered, and relatively flexible programs for learning were used.
11. The programs were effective and interesting to children (as perceived by parents).
12. For the minority who used standardized achievement tests, children rated above average.
13. The school formally convened for 3-4 hours per day.
14. Children studied on their own an average of 2.7 hours per day.
15. The home school was approved by local authorities.
16. Most often instructional materials prepared by the parents were used.
17. They had access to learning resources.
18. The curriculum covered a wide range of conventional course offerings (with math, reading, and science as the three most often stressed).
19. The home school was operated for more than two years.
20. Families decided to home school for various reasons, which follow in order of their importance: (a) concern for moral health of children, (b) concern over character development of their children, (c) "..excess rivalry and

ridicule in conventional schools..." (p. 142), (d) overall poor quality education in public schools, and (e) desire to enjoy children at home in early years of their lives.

Linden

In a similar vein, Linden (1983) conducted a descriptive survey of home schooling in Texas. Without detailed explanation, she reported that the sample (108) was drawn "...so that a good cross-section of Texas was represented" (p. 27, 28). Sixty-six surveys were returned and deemed usable. The frequency distributions and measures of central tendency were appropriately used to present the data. Linden's findings agreed with characteristics 1, 5, 13, 14, 17, 18, 20 a, b, and c listed previously under Gustavsen's 1981 survey. Linden's findings did differ in a few ways. Corresponding to the numbers listed under Gustavsen, Linden found that:

3. The main home educator in her Texas sample had only a high school education.
4. The median household income was $10,000-$15,000.
8. There was an average of 4.74 persons per family.
9. The majority lived in suburban situations.
12. When standardized achievement tests were used, children scored equal to or above national averages.

Linden also reported that:

1. Most home schoolers lived in single family dwellings.
2. Parents controlled the television watching done by children.
3. Parents did not approve of how evolution was taught in public schools.
4. Parents perceived a lack of religious freedom in public schools.

Greene

Green (1984) likewise examined home school families; her survey included those in Alaska's Centralized Correspondence

Study Program (CCS). CCS is a '..complete K-12 education program delivered to students at home through the mails' (madden, 1986, p.3) and is operated by the Alaska Department of Education (ADE). It is open to any Alaskan resident who has not completed high school, and it is public education. A home teacher, usually a parent, teaches the CCS student and is under the supervision of an advisory, or certificated, teacher in Juneau, Alaska (Madden). From a 457-name directory, Greene randomly selected 200 families, of which 189 were judged usable for the study. Eighty-eight completed the questionnaire (16-item for parents and 11-item for students) and returned them by the cutoff date. Green's findings agreed with characteristics 3 (apparently), 6, 10, 18, and 20 a and b listed above under Gustavsen (1981). Green found that 92% of the time the mother was the home teacher. Thirty-eight percent of the mothers had completed some college courses, 26 % had completed high school or a G.E.D., and 24% had a four-year college degree or higher. Somewhat unlike item 9 under Gustavsen, Greene found that 26% of the families lived in areas of population 15,000 or greater and 31% of the parents reported they did not live in a community at all. The CCS students were relatively evenly distributed from ages 5-16; with only two 17-year-olds.

Among other things, Greene (1984) also reported that reasons for being in CCS included:

1. The family lived too far from school and no bus service was available (33% of respondents).
2. The family traveled part of the year (22%).
3. The parents wanted to integrate daily practical life

skills with schooling (52%).
4. Children had unhappy experiences in regular school (18%).
5. Home school was consistent with their self-sufficient lifestyle (18%).

Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction

A survey was conducted of 434 parents who volunteered to be involved in a pilot study of parents as tutors, or home schooling, in Washington State (WSSPI, 1985). The results of the survey were in agreement with items 2, 3, and 8 listed above under Gustavsen (1981). The results also gave information somewhat different from Gustavsen's according to the two corresponding items below:

4. More than 55% of the families had an income of $15,000-$35,000.
9. 27% lived in areas of population 5,000 or less; while 31% lived in communities of 10,000-50,000.

In addition, the WSSPI found that:

1. 60% of the parents were 31-40 years of age.
2. 88% of the parents were women.
3. 74% of the parents were Caucasian.

Taylor

A fifth study, that included a survey of the traits of home schools, was done by Taylor (1986). He began with a list of 45,000 potential subject families from all major geographical areas of the U.S.; from which 2,000 were randomly selected. It was estimated that 500 of these would qualify as participant families with 4th through 12th grade home school youth. Two hundred twenty-four demographic surveys and self-concept instruments (to be explained later) were returned and usable; quite evenly representing the four major geographical regions of the U.S. The results of the 12-item demographic survey basically agreed with item 3 (14.33 years of education) and 9 listed above under Gustavsen (1981). On the other hand, corresponding to the Gustavsen items, Taylor found:

4. 47.3% of the families reported an income of at least $30,000 and 28.6% had an income of 20,000 to $29,999.

8. There was an average of 3.7 children per home school family.

Furthermore, his findings contrasted with Greene's (1984) in that most (68.3%) home school children were 9-12 years old and 29.8% were 13-17 years of age.

In addition, Taylor's (1986) findings showed that:

1. 50.4% of the home school children were male and 49.6% were female.
2. 82.6% had previously attended conventional school (which agrees with Greene (1984).
3. 5.45 years was the average age for commencement of formal instruction.
4. On the average, each child had completed 2.66 years of home school.
5. The average home school family had 2.46 children involved in the home school.

Summary

It is evident that the five studies discussed above provide various profiles of home school families. There is no characteristic listed above under Gustavsen (1981) that was reported and agreed upon by all four reports. A clearer summary might be to say that there was no evidence contradictory to items numbered 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, and 20a through 20e listed above under Gustavsen. In addition, the last four reports presented various other characteristics of home school families and home school children.

Since Taylor (1986) is the most recent study and involved the most representative sampling of home schoolers across the country, it is suggested that it offers the most reliable characterization of the U.S. home school population with respect to the aspects with which the study dealt.

Outcomes of Home Schooling

With a generalized description of the contemporary home school milieu in mind, a review of literature related to the outcomes of home schooling will be executed next. This will begin with a survey of the literature that is at least tangentially related to outcomes, and finish with that body of literature directly related to the learner outcomes of home schooling. The latter will concentrate on those studies which have provided empirical evidence.

Some Evidence

Eleven years ago Moore and Moore (1975) reported that based on their review of early childhood education studies:

> The consensus of scientific evidence on the home versus the preschool is clear for the majority of children. They receive a better foundation for future development and learning from a secure and responsive home environment in which understanding parents are the teachers. (p. 8, 9) There is sufficient evidence from sound educational research to challenge the validity of school laws that *require* children to be in school before age 8, unless the home environment is intolerable. (p. 27).

Later, Moore (1985) pointed out that even the "...principal study supporting early childhood education, the Perry Preschool

Project, has for years *focused more attention on the home* (through weekly home visits) than has the typical early childhood education program' (p. 63). The Hewitt Research Foundation (1986c) also reported, referring to a recent study by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center at the University of North Carolina, that '...enrollment in high-quality preschool day-care programs and extra academic help through the first three years of school do improve the chances of disadvantaged children to do well in school' (p. 1). The Committee for Economic Development (1985) confirmed the findings that preschool programs such as the Perry and Head Start have only been clearly beneficial for children from economically '...disadvantaged families' (p. 45, 46). Still, there is recent evidence that at least in some aspects of intellectual and social development, the lower socioeconomic groups are not handicapped at home. Some of this evidence, by the researchers Tizard and Hughes (1984), Tizard, Hughes, Carmichael, and Pinkerton (1983a), Tizard, Hughes, Carmichael, and Pinkerton (1983b), and Tizard, Hughes, Pinkerton, and Carmichael (1982) will be discussed later.

In 1975 Moore and Moore spoke of home as being the best place for children before age eight. In 1985 Moore lengthened the time that children should remain in the home environment until perhaps the age 10 or 12. Referring to a Hewitt Research Foundation review of more than 8,000 studies, Moore (1985) reaffirmed most of what he said in his 1982 'Research and common sense: Therapies for our homes and schools' and concluded:

> Whether the focus is on achievement, on behavior, on sociability, or on such other aspects of a child's development as the brain, the senses, cognition, coordination, or socialization, available evidence overwhelmingly suggests that, unless the child is handicapped or acutely deprived (a condition not necessarily linked to socioeconomic status), he or she should be allowed to develop physically and to explore personal fantasies and intuitions until somewhere between ages 8 and 12. ...Except for highly specialized clinical services, even handicapped children are best taught in their homes prior to the age of 8 or 10 (p. 63).

Although Moore and Moore have generally limited their professional journal comments lauding the home to the ages up to 10 or 12, they and Hewitt Research Foundation (Moore, 1986) do support home schooling for all ages of youth.

John Holt, a long time education analyst and critic, changed from being one who called for school reform to one calling for 'unschooling' and become, before his death in 1985, a great leader of home schooling for all ages (Holt, 1981). He and Holt Associates, Inc. have encouraged parents of children nationwide to reap the potential benefits of home schooling. For example, Holt (1983) explained that

> ... when children are allowed to decide when they will begin the exciting task of learning to read and are allowed to work out for themselves the problems of doing so ...the great majority of them learn to read much more quickly, enthusiastically and efficiently than most children in conventional schools. (p.393)

Many parents, writing letters to *Growing Without Schooling* and *The Parent Educator and Family Report*, have confirmed Holt's conclusion about reading and other intellectual pursuits. Holt (1983) also addressed the teacher/student outcomes of the home school setting when he wrote, based on personal experience:

> But even the most attentive, perceptive, and thoughtful classroom teachers could never elicit from their students the amount and intensity of feedback that home-schooling parents typically get from their children, because parents know and understand their children so much better. (p. 393)

Holt's claim about the amount of feedback in the home school versus the conventional school was recently confirmed by Moore and Moore (1986). They cited a study done by Goodlad and deduced that each student in a public school averaged one or two personal responses per day from his or her teacher. "In contrast, our counts of daily responses in typical home schools ranged from about 100 to more than 300" (Moore & Moore, 1986, p. 74). The Moore's figures are difficult to validate since many of them are not published with in research reports.

Other claims about home schooling, based on anecdotes and *a priori* appeals to logic, have been and are presently being made. In 1981 Benson completed a descriptive, naturalistic report on "The development of a home school." Benson was the developer; his wife conducted the home school; their nine children were the students. Among the 10 major advantages of home schooling that he listed, the following four were particularly relevant to this paper:

1. parents having an opportunity to learn much along with their children,
2. individualized instruction, especially for gifted or slow learners,

3. flexibility, and
4. pursuit of excellence in education.

All of his conclusions about the advantages of home school were based upon his experiences and appeals to the logic of the reader. Benson reported that home school children do well on standardized tests, but no quantitative evidence was given regarding achievement, socialization, and so on. However, other reports, such as Gustavsen (1981), Linden (1983) and Greene (1984) have generally concurred with the four advantages listed by Benson.

Divoky (1983) found that "The goal, many veteran home schoolers suggest, is to be able to get out of the way of children's learning, to simply provide an environment that allows youngsters to be self-directed" (p. 397). This goal jibes with Benson's (1981) flexibility advantage and is often reported as "attained" by parents in various home schooling publications such as *Growing Without Schooling, The Parent Educator and Family Report,* and *The Teaching Home*. Likewise, the preceding publications have included reports from numerous parents who have been in agreement with Benson's claims. The parents write that they continually delight in how much they have learned as home school parents and how much their slow and gifted learners have accelerated in their endeavors.

With respect to the "pursuit of excellence" advantage, there is growing evidence that youth who spend more time in a home school setting may have a better opportunity to achieve excellence in learning. For example, McCurdy (1960) examined "The childhood pattern of genius" in a study supported by the

Smithsonian Institution. He started with a list of 282 eminent people whose IQs had been estimated by another researcher. He chose the 27 with IQs of 160 or greater, eliminated the seven whose biographical data were too difficult to obtain, and then had 20 people to study. McCurdy's list included people such as John Stuart Mill, Blaise Pascal, Voltaire, John Quincy Adams, and William Pitt. In summary, McCurdy wrote:

> ... the present survey of biographical information on a sample of twenty men of genius suggested that the typical developmental pattern includes as important aspects: (1) a high degree of attention focused upon the child by parents and other adults, expressed in intensive educational measures and, usually, abundant love; (2) isolation from other children, especially outside the family; and (3) a rich efflorescence of fantasy as a reaction to the preceding conditions. It might be remarked that the mass education of our public school system is, in its way, a vast experiment on the effect of reducing all three factors to a minimum; accordingly, it should tend to suppress the occurrence of genius. (p. 38)

Besides the above *post hoc* study of genius which elucidated childhood conditions that many claim today are similar to home schooling, there have been recent anecdotal claims about empirical evidence regarding the outcomes of home schooling. For example, McCurdy (1985) found that "A few testing programs involving home schooling have shown that these children achieve as well or better than those in schools, although the studies were not well-controlled" (p. 47). Wartes (1985) made a similar warning, about research design weaknesses, concerning achievement score results that he reported. However, the preceding scattered and anecdotal reports on home school outcomes may not satisfy all concerned, such as those in the legal and education professions.

Wendel (1985) studied the topic of 'Home schooling in lieu of compulsory school attendance: Statutory and constitutional issues.' He concluded that 'The history of case law demonstrates that no one person or political entity has a right to educate a child unfettered by competing considerations' (p.104). Furthermore, the researcher pointed out that the education of our youth will probably continue to be an unresolved issue. In order to assist legal and educational considerations, Wendel suggested that further research should be done to '...determine achievement levels of home schoolers in comparison to the national norm' (p. 108).

Altman (1985) also studied the legal implications of home instruction and did this by surveying the opinions of 80 superintendents and other administrators in the Washington State. Although he included an excerpt from a cited court case in his report, 'When the law treats a reasonable, conscientious act as a crime, it subverts its own power. It invites civil disobedience. It impairs the very habits which nourish and preserve the law' (p. 134). He found that those surveyed believed that home school children should be periodically administered achievement tests.

It appears that, from a legal standpoint, people want empirical evidence in order to judge whether home school families are meeting the perceived needs of a democratic society. It would seem equally reasonable that sincere educators would want to examine the observable information regarding home school outcomes. The goal of the next section of this study is to examine the available data related to the outcomes of home schooling.

Evidence That is More Empirical

Perkel

Those studies which have provided the most observable and quantitative findings will now be reviewed. First, some studies that dealt with the "preschool" ages will be presented and second, those that dealt with older youth will be considered. Within these two categories, the studies will be presented generally in chronological order, from oldest to most recent. Unless otherwise specified, the designs assigned to each study are named according to those by Campbell and Stanley (1963).

Perkel's (1979) purpose was to "...determine effects on cognitive growth of home based intervention programs for four-year-olds from low socio-economic and Spanish speaking backgrounds, and to compare relative effectiveness of home based and center based preschool programs" (p. 1859A). The treatment was the "Home Instruction and Teaching Program" which was administered to two selected treatment groups. The third treatment group consisted of four-year-olds randomly selected from a local preschool program and the fourth group consisted of the same age who had no preschool experience. The dependent variable was the score on the Leiter International Performance Scale (LIPS).

Werner (1965) reported on the reliability and validity of the LIPS and said that it is a 60-item, nonverbal scale most suitable for ages three to eight. The norm group was very homogeneous, composed of middle-class, mid-western, metropolitan children. Split-half reliabilities are in the .90s, but "There is a real need to determine both tester-observer and test-retest reliability..." (Werner, 1965, p. 815). In terms of validity, it has "...fairly high correlations with the two most widely used individual intelligence tests for children...," the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children and the Stanford-Binet, with correlations at .79 to .80 and .69 to .93 (Werner, p. 815). Werner also pointed out that there is some ambiguity about "What abilities does the scale measure?" (p.526). If it is an intelligence test, one can ask whether it is appropriate to use it as a measure of the dependent variable, since it is questionable whether a treatment can change the intelligence of a person. Perkel used the static-group comparison design. Student t-tests were employed with *p* <.05 and of the findings made, the following was relevant to this paper: No significant differences were found in acquired cognitive skills between home based and preschool participants" (p. 1859A).

However, there are several internal and external threats to validity with the static-group comparison design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). Among these threats are selection, mortality, interaction of selection and maturation, etc. and interaction of selection and the treatment. Another potential problem in Perkel's (1979) study was that the norm group for the LIPS appears to have been quite different from at least a major portion of the subjects used in her study. At least any threats posed by this norming problem would be partially controlled by the fact that the same instrument was used for all in the study. Perkel's conclusions included: "(1) Home based programs can be as effective as center based programs in increasing cognitive skills" and "(3) Low socioeconomic parents can be effective teachers of their own young children" (p. 1859A). Bearing in mind the various weaknesses of the study's design, minimal confidence can be had in her conclusions.

Tizard, Hughes, Pinkerton, and Carmichael (1982)

Tizard, Hughes, Pinkerton, and Carmichael (1982) were also interested in four-year-olds as they compared adults' cognitive demands on girls at home and at nursery school. The two treatments for each girl were being at nursery school with a teacher(s) in the morning and at home with her mother in the afternoon. The independent variable was the number of cognitive demands, per each of four categories, made on the child by either the teacher or the mother. The intercoder reliability on different aspects ranged from 84% to 91%, and the content validity of the codes was explained by the authors. The static-group comparison design was used. Fifteen middle-class and fifteen working-class girls were selected for the study, and all parents of the selected children agreed to participate in the study. It was reported that the working-class children were probably typical of the majority of those who attended half-day nursery school (while no such comment was made about the middle-class subjects). The statistical design was apparently a two-by-two, two way ANOVA, comparing home to school and middle- to working-class. The authors did not explain whether they transformed the nominal data to an interval-type form. If they did not, ANOVA was inappropriate. If they did, each child was observed in 100 'turns of talk' so an effect size of .40 could have been assigned (E. W. Courtney, personal communication, July 16, 1986). With alpha at .05 and beta at .20, the minimum sample size should have been twenty-six subjects per cell (Cohen, 1969); the researchers had fifteen.

Tizard, Hughes, Pinkerton, and Carmichael (1982) found, at statistically significant levels, that:

1. Cognitive demands were used more frequently by mothers of both social class groups than by teachers.
2. More often cognitive demands were not answered by children at school than at home.
3. There were fewer questions asked by children at school, and
4. There was no social class difference in the hourly rate, percent, or range of cognitive demands addressed to children at home or at school.

The weaknesses of the study include the previously mentioned threats to validity for the static-group comparison design, the small sample size, and the ambiguity of how the statistical analysis was executed. The researchers reported that they were careful to get homogeneous groups of girls for their study. Keeping in mind the design weaknesses, the researchers' findings are still fairly believable, because the data are so definite in the direction of the conclusions that they made.

Tizard, Hughes, Carmichael, and Pinkerton (1938a)

Tizard, Hughes, Carmichael, and Pinkerton (1983a) also studied children's questions and adults' answers. Their aim was

> ... 'why' questions, were more frequent in certain contexts, settings [home v. nursery school] and social class groups than in others. We assumed that such questions were potentially valuable both as expressions of curiosity and also because they provided occasions for adult [sic] to enlarge the child's understanding. (p. 276)

The dependent variable included the number of questions asked by the children, nature of questions, context of the questions, and adult responses to the questions (five categories). The reliabilities between four coders ranged from 84% to 89%. The content validity of what was coded was implicitly addressed in the description of the coding procedure. This study was of the static-group comparison design; it had the same treatment, sampling matrix, and sample size as the Tizard, Hughes, Pinkerton, and Carmichael (1982) study. The sample size was adequate for the chi-square, t-test, and correlation analyses employed. Again, they did not explain whether they transformed the normal data for the F-test. If they did, there was an average of 38 questions per child so an effect size of .25 would have been appropriate (E. W. Courtney, personal communication, July 16, 1986). With alpha at .05 and beta at .80, the minimum sample size should have been 64 subjects per cell for the F-test (Cohen, 1969); while the study included 15 per cell.

Tizard, Hughes, Carmichael, and Pinkerton (1983a) made the following findings that are relevant to the topic of this paper:

1. Many more questions were asked by children at home than at school.
2. 10 of the 15 working-class girls asked no 'why' questions at school.
3. Most children's questions were asked when the adult was stationary for a prolonged period of time and was not

too busy - a context rare at school.
4. Persistent questioning (at least twenty-two turns of adult-child conversation) was rare at school compared to at home.
5. "... asked a far larger proportion of questions than did mothers..." (p. 279).
6. "...the children seem to learn very quickly that their role at school is to answer, not to ask questions" (p. 279).
7. Most "why" questions and persistent questioning concerned non-play objects and events, especially those outside the present context; most school conversations were just the opposite.
8. Working-class girls were particularly affected by the school setting; asked fewer questions, asked more procedural questions, and exhibited less curiosity.

There were weaknesses inherent to the design, and the sample size was inadequate for the F-test. However, most of the analyses included adequate sample size and the data was clearly supportive of the findings reported.

Tizard, Hughes, Carmichael, and Pinkerton (1983b).

Based on the same research design, sampling, and treatments as the preceding study, Tizard, Hughes, Carmichael, and Pinkerton (1983b) investigated the language use and language development of middle- and working-class four-year-old children at home and at school. The dependent variable included the complexity of the speech of the children, their use of language for complex thinking, complexity of the language of the mothers used toward their children, and children's and mothers' talk together. Eleven cognitive, and one "no code," categories were designated. The intercoder (two coders) agreement was 72% on the eleven categories and 92% for all twelve categories. Content validity was implicitly discussed in the description of the categories. The analyses of the data involved the F-test.

Again, they did not explain whether they transformed the nominal data to interval type form. If they did, the appropriate effect size for each of the three tables was .25 (E. W. Courtney, personal communication, July 16, 1986), and with alpha at .05 and beta at .80, the minimum sample size should have been 64 per cell (Cohen, 1969); while the study used 15 per cell. The sample size was adequate for the correlations done.

The following findings of Tizard, Hughes, Carmichael, and Pinkerton (1983b) are relevant to the topic of this paper:

1. Mothers used language for complex purposes more often than did teachers, when expressed as hourly rates.
2. Teachers addressed more complex language to middle-class than to working-class children.
3. Children used language for complex purposes more at home than at school.
4. The school setting reduced the working-class children's usage of complex language more than it did the middle-class children's.
5. Both adults and children had a wider range of language use at home than at school.

Again keeping in mind the weaknesses of the design and sample size for the F-test, the data were strongly in favor of the findings and conclusions reported. The researchers concluded "...that in their own milieu [home], working class children display all the essential verbal cognitive skills" (p.540). Furthermore, despite widespread belief in the benefits of nursery school, "...the evidence suggests that they [children] are much more likely to receive this 'measured attention to the child's language needs' from their mothers" than from teachers (p. 541), and "Certainly this study suggests that children's intellectual and language needs are much more likely to be satisfied at home than at school" (Tizard & Hughes, 1984, p. 256).

The studies in this section dealt with children of ages preceding general compulsory attendance age in the U.S. Perkel (1979) found no significant difference in acquired cognitive skills between preschool and home based groups of four-year-olds. Tizard, Hughes, Pinkerton, and Carmichael (1982) found that more cognitive demands were placed on four-year-olds at home by mothers than at nursery school by teachers. Tizard, Hughes, Carmichael, and Pinkerton (1983a) found children to ask significantly more questions at home than at school, and Tizard, Hughes, Carmichael, and Pinkerton (1983b) found significantly more complex language used at home by children and parents than at school by teachers and children. The evidence from these studies suggest that the home environment with a parent present is at least equal to and perhaps more cognitively challenging and productive for very young children than are conventional schools.

Next, studies that compared older youth (generally ages 6-17) of home schooling and conventional schooling will be reviewed.

Gustavsen.

Gustavsen (1981) analyzed his survey of 221 home school families nationwide. His study was described previously. Achievement tests (Iowa, Stanford Achievement, California, Metropolitan, and "others") were used by 40.3% of the families and he concluded that "...children's achievement rated above average for those who reported using standardized achievement tests' (p. 143). However, this 'Conclusion' was not supported by any data in the study that this author could find. In addition, if parents did report this fact, there was no control on the validity of their reports.

Western Australia Department of Education.

In Australia, where many students are far from a conventional school, the Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme (ISMS) was developed by the government in order '...to develop modern correspondence courses for rural matriculation students' (Western Australia Department of Education [WADE], 1979, p. 3). The portion of the study that was especially relevant to this paper used the Tertiary Admissions Examination (TAE) score of the students in ISMS as the dependent variable. Neither reliability nor validity data were given for the TAE. The treatments were involvement in ISMS, in which the majority of school learning was done at home, versus being in conventional schools. The static-group comparison design was utilized. In 1977, 21 ISMS students took the TAE, and 25 took it in 1978. The author simply made a qualitative statement about student performance on the test, and therefore the sample size was adequate.

WADE (1979) reported that '...the main indicator of the Scheme's success is academic achievement,' and 'The overall performance of these groups [1977 and 1978] has been satisfactory' (p. 16). The term 'satisfactory' was not explained. The study had the weaknesses of the static-group comparison design, and the reader is simply left to accept or reject the conclusion that ISMS students did adequately well on the system's achievement test.

Linden.

Linden (1983) (previously described) also surveyed home school families and reported some achievement test scores. The dependent variable was each youth's score on the reading, mathematics, and language portions of the California Achievement Tests (CAT). Content validity of the CAT "...is based largely on the procedures followed in the development of the tests" (Bryan, 1978, p. 35, 36) and "The median of the within-grade...correlations between reading and mathematics is .75; between reading and language, .79; and between mathematics and language, .75" (Bryan, p. 36). The median alternate-form reliability coefficient for language and reading is .87 and it is .86 for mathematics (Bryan). The treatments in Linden's study were home schooling versus conventional schooling.

Linden (1983) simply listed the actual grade of each of the sixteen children (whose scores were available) and the grade level that each child scored on the three CAT subjects. The youth ranged from grade 1.9 to 11.6, and the averages of their three scores were on the average 1.04 grades above their actual grade level. If a design could be assigned to the portion of the study that presented the CAT scores, it would be a very weak static-group comparison. All that can be told from the data is that the CAT scores of 16 youths were reported, and they averaged one grade level above their actual grades.

Hewitt Research Foundation.

The Hewitt Research Foundation (1985) reported that in a court case involving home schooling, "North Dakota home schoolers average about 83 percentile points on their standardized tests" (p.5), 22 percentiles higher than the rest of North Dakota school youth. This finding about North Dakota home school scores was later reconfirmed (Hewitt Research Foundation, 1986a). Hewitt Research Foundation (1986b) also reported:

> In a random sampling of Hewitt-Moore Child Development Center Curriculum students, including many who recently had come to home schooling from other schools, the standardized test average ranged between 78 and 80 percent, with those scoring higher who have been with Hewitt longer. This is consistent with past figures. (p. 2)

Both of the above Hewitt reports involve the static-group comparison design and neither included sample size.

Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The WSSPI (1985) planned to evaluate the implementation and success of two State Board of Education-approved "...private experimental programs using the parent as tutor under the supervision of a certificated teacher" (p. 1). In terms of learner outcomes, the scores on the Stanford Achievement Tests (SAT) were used as the dependent variable. Ebel (1978) reported on the SAT the

> ...split-half and K-R 20 reliability coefficients for each test at each level, for beginning, middle, and end of the grade for which each level is most appropriate. Of the 668 coefficients reported 428, or 64 percent, are .90 or

> above. Only 30, and all of these in Primary 1 or 2 batteries, are below .80. It is clear that these tests have satisfactory reliability. (p. 100).

The median split-half and K-R 20 reliability for math is .89 (Begle, 1978), and "Claims for content and construct validity appear justified" (Suydam, 1978, p. 435). The treatments were involvement in the parent as tutor program versus the apparently conventional schooling of the 275,000-pupil norm group. Children "...in a number of cities and communities across the state" were involved (WISSPI, p. 1). The study followed the static-group comparison design. The scores of one hundred students, grades K-8, were analyzed and presented as percentiles. WSSPI emphasized that the reliability of the data was lowered since there were fewer than 100 students in each grade level. Presentation of percentiles was appropriate.

The K-8 children in the "parent as tutor" program averaged the following percentile scores: reading, 62; language, 56.5; and math, 53 (WSSPI, 1985). With the weaknesses of the design in mind, the reader is likely to accept the fact that "...the majority of the scores were average, or above average, in Reading, Language and Math" (WSSPI, p. 1).

Reynolds and Williams.

The SAT (previously described) score was also used as the dependent variable to measure achievement in a case study of three families conducted by Reynolds and Williams (1985). The scores of two children were reported. The first grade child averaged seventh grade on seven test areas, and the third grade child averaged grade 8.3 on seven test areas.

Alaska Department of Education.

In the far north of the U.S. is Alaska's Centralized Correspondence Study Program (CCS) which "...is a complete K-12 education program delivered to students at home through the mails" (Madden, 1986, p.3), is operated by the Alaska Department of Education (ADE), open to any Alaskan resident who has not completed high school, and is public education paid for by the people of the state (Madden). A home teacher, usually a parent, teaches the student. The home teacher is under the supervision of an advisory, certificated teacher who is located in Juneau, Alaska. The ADE has been attempting to assess the success of CCS students for several years. In one study, the ADE (1986) purposed to examine 1981 data in order to (a) assess the achievement of CCS students compared to Alaska and national norms, (b) assess the long-term effects of CCS enrollment on achievement, and (c) compare pre- and post-CCS achievement. The dependent variables were the students' scores on the CAT (form C, levels 11-19, reading and math) and on the Alaska Statewide Assessment Tests (ASA) in reading and math. The reliability and validity of the CAT were previously delineated, and overall, the "...CAT is one of the better batteries of its kind" (Bryan, 1978, p. 37). Reliability and validity information for the ASA could not be found by this author. The treatments were involvement in CCS home schooling versus conventional schooling. Generally, the static-group comparison design was employed. In addition, the one-group pretest-posttest design was used to approach purpose 3 of the study. First the results and analyses dealing with the CAT will be reviewed.

The CAT reading scores for CCS grades 1-3 were .58 to 1.31 standard deviations (SD) higher than the norm. Grades 4-8 reading scores were .67 to 1.12 SD higher than the norm. Grades 1-8 math scores of children taught at home were .42 to 1.13 SD higher than the norm, with the exception of grade five which was .21 SD higher than the norm. It appears that the Kilmogorov-Smirnov one-sample test was appropriately used (Hays, 1963) with adequate sample sizes. The CCS student scores were significantly (\p\<.01) higher than the theoretical distribution. Three other findings follow:

1. Those 4-8 grade students in CCS two years or more scored significantly higher on the CAT than those in it less than two years (t-test, *p* ,.05) (.61 SD higher in math and .83 SD higher in reading).
2. The scores of 4-8 grade students after CCS involvement were significantly greater than before CCS study (t-test, *p* <.05) (.29 SD greater in math, and .43 SD greater in reading).
3. On the ASA, CCS students scored higher than the Alaska averages in reading and math (by 14.27% in fourth grade reading and by 8% in eight grade reading; by 7.7% in fourth grade math and by 6% in eighth grade math).

The weaknesses of the static-group comparison have already been mentioned; while the threats to validity in the one-group pretest-posttest part of the study are even more numerous (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). However, the CAT is valid and reliable. Appropriate statistics were used, and adequate samples were involved. It can be safely concluded that for the types of students involved in CCS, the program at least kept them on par with their state and national peers in terms of math and reading achievement.

The ADE (1984) summarized the Science Research Associates (SRA) test scores of the CCS students in the spring of 1984. The dependent variables were math and reading scores on the SRA. SRA (1981) reported that the composite test score (used by ADE) K-R 20 reliabilities ranged from .92 to .99. In terms of validity, scores on the SRA correlate with students' course grades in the range .43-.79, which is "...consistent with the magnitude of relationships expected..." (SRA, p. 55). Correlations with other achievement test batteries' total scores "...were in the .80s and .90s, and the individual test scores were in the .70s and .80s" (SRA, p. 61). The design of the study was the static-group comparison; with 53% (apparently 354 tested; unclear reporting) of the April of 1984 students being tested. Simple percentiles were presented. The results for the 22% of the CCS students who were tested "on-site" (not at home) were as follows:

1. "...9 of the 12 grades fell above the 75th percentile in reading ..." (ADE, p. 1).
2. 8 of 12 grades fell above the 60th percentile in language.
3. 9 of the 12 grades fell above the 60th percentile in math (ADE).

When one includes the CCS students tested at home, their composite test scores were even higher than those just listed (ADE, 1984).

The ADE (1985) again assessed the CCS home schooled youths' achievement in the spring of 1985. The dependent variables were scores on the SRA reading, math, language, and science tests and scores on the ASA reading and math tests.

These two instruments were previously discussed. The static-group comparison design was used with adequate sample size (at least 16 at each grade level) for the presentation of percentiles. Figure 1 represents the ASA scores collated over a five-year period.

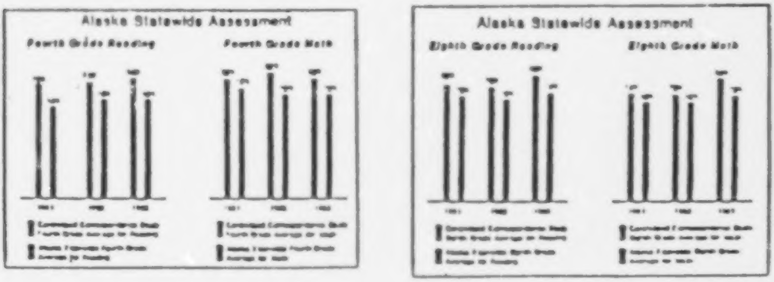

Figure 1. Alaska Statewide Assessment, 1981-1985.
(From Falle, 1986, p. 2)

In terms of 1985 SRA data, the following grades and corresponding subjects were considered:

K, 1 - reading and math
2, 3 - reading, math, and language
4-11 - reading, math, language, and science.

The following findings were reported:

1. For grades K-6, CCS students scored at least six percentiles higher than conventionally schooled Alaskans on all comparisons; with the majority of these above the 80th percentile of the SRA norm.
2. For grades 7-11, CCS students were 2-27 percentiles higher than Alaska user norm on 17 comparisons and equal on three comparisons; with the majority of these at or

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above the 70th percentile of the SRA norm.

It appears that the home schooling of CCS has allowed students to achieve at least as well as their Alaskan peers and better than the national norms. Falle (1986) discussed the fact that the ADE is attempting to develop more reliable means of administering standardized tests to home schooled children. Nevertheless, he did not indicate that this reliability issue was a major obstacle to accepting as valid the superior achievement of CCS students.

The preceding studies represent most of what has been done in terms of critical analyses of the cognitive achievement of the home school youth. The available evidence indicated that home school youth of compulsory education age score equal to or better than their conventional school peers on measures of cognitive achievement. This statement is made while keeping in mind the limitations of the static-group comparison design; which was generally the design of the studies discussed in this section. There is no complete assurance that the home and conventional school groups were homogeneous in nature. It is quite clear, however, that the overall phenomenon (the combination of the type of youth involved in home school and the home school "treatment") is not inhibiting the youth from matching or excelling average conventional school achievement.

A very different, and yet interesting and controversial, area deals with the affective development of home school children. Socialization is the affective dimension most frequently mentioned in discussions or debates concerning home centered learning.

In its report on the ISMS, WADE (1979) made the qualitative conclusion:

> Students working by themselves or in small groups are severely handicapped socially. The social interaction experienced at camps [provided by ISMS] is good for all students, but those students attending large schools daily have an obvious advantage in this regard. (p. 19).

Likewise, concern for socialization of home school children was evident in the "parent as tutor program" in Washington (WSSPI, 1985). Tizard and Hughes (1984) mentioned that some of the educational needs of children cannot be met within the home; for example, "...how to get on with other children, to be a member of a group, to separate from their families, and to relate to, and communicate with, strange adults" (p. 259). Statements such as the above ones are basically appeals to *a priori* knowledge. Some empirical evidence might be helpful in the discussion.

Taylor

A study was recently completed that attempted to partially address concerns about socialization. Taylor (1986) "...sought to analyze the relationship which exists between home schooling and the self-concept of children in grades four through twelve" (p. 5). Taylor perceived self-concept as a relevant construct in that it "...is closely linked with values, social competence, and self-evaluation" (p. 53) and achievement. Furthermore, most students of learning realize that the importance of positive self-concept to effective learning is clearly emphasized in education's contemporary writings

(Travers, 1982; Carin & Sund, 1985).

Taylor (1986) used the youths' scores on the *Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale* (PHSCS) as the dependent variable. It is an 80-item, self-report instrument used to measure self-concept in children and adolescents; it is normed for children grades 4-12. In terms of reliability, its internal consistency is .90, and the median of reported test-retest reliability scores is .73. The six subscale reliabilities are considerably lower than for the total (global) score. The predictive validity of the PHSCS has been reported at .56 and .61. Taylor cited several studies that have said that the PHSCS is a valid measure of the central core of personality. In addition, the convergent validity between the PHSCS and four other similar instruments has ranged from .60 to .71. The instrument was normed to public school youth. Taylor (1986) rendered a detailed study of the PHSCS and made the statements about it that are reported in this paper.

The treatments in the study were home school and conventional public school. The design basically followed the static-group comparison paradigm. The sampling done by Taylor (1986) was previously explained in this paper; 224 fourth through twelfth grade home schooled youth from all about the U.S. were studied. The sample size was adequate for the t-tests done. For multiple regression, a minimum of 14 subjects for the first variable and 10 for each variable thereafter are needed (E.W. Courtney, personal communication, July, 1986). Therefore, Taylor needed a minimum of 144 for his 14 predictor variables; his sample of 224 was more than adequate.

Some of Taylor's (1986) findings follow:

1. The self-concept of home school youth was significantly higher (t-test, $p < .001$) than that of conventional school youth for the global and all six subscale scores.
2. The home school global score was 1.0 SD higher than for the conventional school youth.

Taylor stated, "Insofar as self-concept is a reflector of socialization... (references given), the findings of this study would suggest that few home-schooling children are socially deprived" (p.160, 161). In addition, Taylor pointed out that his findings jibed with those of others who have studied home school families.

Again, the weaknesses of the static-group comparison design have been previously listed. However, Taylor (1986) used appropriate statistics, had a more than adequate sample size, and was careful to obtain a representative and as close as possible to a random sample as he could. All aspects of the study considered, the results are clear and believable as representative of the home school youth who were studied.

No studies were located that relate to the psychomotor development of home school youth compared to conventional school youth. Next a summary will be offered.

Summary Based on Preceding Studies

Characteristics Of Home School Families

It is apparent that a wide variety of individuals are involved in home schooling; just as the U.S. is comprised of a pluralis~ic Foup. Home school involves: agnostics, Christians, Mormons, five and 17year-olds, low-and high-income families, Blacks, Orientals, and Caucasians, parents with Ph.D.s and parents with G.E.D.s, and onechild and 10 children families. However, an attempt to normalize the various individuals and their home schooling would generally yield, among others, the following characteristics:

1. Both parents are actively involved; with the mother/homemaker as the teacher most of the time.
2. Parents have attended or graduated from college.
3. Total household income is $20,000-$30,000.
4. Over 60% regularly attend religious services.
5. Three children are in the family.
6. The learning program is flexible and highly individualized, involving both homemade and purchased curriculum materials.
7. Children are formally 'schooled' 3-4 hours per day, and often spend extra time in individual learning endeavors.
8. They study a wide range of conventional subjects, with an emphasis on math, reading, and science.
9. The home school is operated for more than two years.
10. Home school is chosen for various reasons, including both cognitive and affective ones.

There is nothing in the research to suggest that home school families, as a group, are bizarre with respect to the characteristics listed above. One trait that is usually implied, and occasionally explicit, in the literature is that the parents who home school their children are extremely interested in and concerned about the total education of their children. In conjunction wilh this trait, they perceive that they, as parents and guardians, have prime responsibility for the education of their young. "And they are willing to be different, to take a socially unorthodox route to rearing the kind of children they want." (Divoky, 1983, p. 397).

Learner outcomes

There have also been at least 11 studies that supply empirical evidence that is directly related to the learner outcomes of home schooling. Perkel (1979) found for low socio-economic and Spanish speaking four-year-olds that cognitive skill could be increased as well at home as at school. Four-year-olds, of both the working and middle clases, were also studied by researchers in Great Britain. Tizard, Hughes, Pinkerton, and Carmichael (1982) found that significantly more cognitive demands on children were made at home than at school and children asked more questions at home than at school. Tizard, Hughes, Carmichael, and Pinkerton (1983a) found that teachers asked a significantly greater proportion of questions than mothers, and children learned quickly that their role at school was to answer, not ask, questions. Tizard, Hughes, Carmichael, and Pinkerton (1983b) also found, at significant levels, that children more frequently used complex language at home than at school.

Home school students of high school age in Western Australia perfomed satisfactorily on achievement tests (WADE, 1979) and Linden (1983) reported above-average scores on the CAT for children of various grade levels. Hewitt Research Foundation (1986b) consistently finds home school students to score in the 70 and 80 percentiles on standardized achievement tests.

In a study involving a more controlled design, K-8 grade home school children scored above (3%-12%) the national average on the SAT in reading, language, and math (WSSPI, 1985).

Youth in a state-managed form of home schooling in Alaska have been scoring significantly higher than conventional schooled youth on the CAT in math, reading, language, and science (ADE, 1984, 1985, 1986; Falle, 1986). The CCS home schooled in Alaska also score higher on achievement tests than conventional schooled Alaskans (ADE, 1985, 1986; Falle, 1986).

Taylor (1986) has provided the only study which carefully examines and offers data regarding the affective component of learning. He found that home school youth scored significantly higher than conventional school youth on the global and all six subscales of the *Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale*.

With respect to cognitive outcomes, then, the evidence suggests that those youth educated in the home school environment will generally do as well or better than their conventional school peers.

The vast majority of home school people score well above average on achievement tests. The evidence in the studies analyzed in this paper is generally reliable. Furthermore, no evidence to the contrary could be found.

Likewise, the available empirical data suggest that home school youth are doing at least as well as those in conventional schools in terms of affective outcomes. Although very limited measured evidence exists regarding the values, attitudes, and socialization of home school youth, no tangible evidence was identified that they are inferior to conventional school youth in these areas.

The findings regarding home school learner outcomes are thus far based upon pre-experimental (Campbell & Stanley, 1963), causal comparative, and correlational research paradigms. It is difficult, although perhaps not impossible, to start with equivalent samples of youth when involved in an attempt to compare home school and conventional school 'treatments.' It is possible to hypothesize that the home school treatment is a causal factor of apparently elevated achievement and self-concept scores, but the research to date cannot be said to come close to proving such an hypothesis.

Possible Explanations for Observed Home School Outcomes

A review of the literature suggests that, in general, home school is related to positive or desirable learner outcomes. If this is true, it is interesting and perhaps worthwhile to speculate as to why home school might enhance, or at least not be a detriment to, learner outcomes. Following are some potential explanations:

1. Home school provides an extremely low student:teacher ratio, usually 1 to 3:1. This allows for a tremendous amount of child/adult interaction, feedback, and behavior reinforcement in the learning setting.

2. Parents are highly involved in their children's learning, and what happens at home is clearly related to learning success (Keeves, 1975; Travers, 1982; U.S. Department of Education, 1986).

3. Parents are "significant others' to their children, and the children will value their parents' behavior enough to imitate it. Parents who home school place high value on learning and not only value teaching their young but also enthusiastically learn themselves. Extra attention from parents may raise the self-concept of children, which is associated with improved learning. Also, many home schooling parents personally experience a renewal of interest in learning. It may be likely that children will

follow the model of their parents in this regard.

4. Some children who are labeled 'disadvantaged' (socio-economically) may actually be benefitted by staying at home for several years rather than going to a conventional school. Tizard and Hughes (1984) concluded, 'Far from compensating for any inadequacies of their home, the staff were in fact lowering their expectations and standards for the working-class children' (p. 257). The milieu of the conventional school may often discriminate against lower socio-economic children. It has been found that higher expectations of youth by adults, perhaps more likely at home for many children, result in greater academic performance by learners (Travers, 1982; U.S. Department of Education, 1986).

5. At home, '...the learning is often embedded in contexts of great meaning to the child' (Tizard & Hughes, 1984, p. 251), and the home schooled are frequently involved in learning within the framework of daily living activities. This setting is similar to some aspects of the quality educative experiences and 'learning by doing' that Dewey (1938) encouraged and the active involvement in learning by discovery that Piaget and Bruner have emphasized (Carin ~ Sund, 1985).

6. Home school lends itself to a high degree of individualization and flexibilily in terms of 'curriculum' for each student. The unique characteristics of each child, whether a deficit or an asset compared to the norm, can be addressed and dealt with on a daily basis without the hindrances of institutional life and operations. Even if the average home school child spends as much as three hours in 'formal' or planned learning activities, he or she is still afforded four or five more hours of the conventional school day to engage in a great variety of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning adivities (Reynolds & Williams, 1985; Gustavsen, 1981; Linden, 1983).

7. Parents at home frequently exhibit behaviors that have consistently appeared in the literature on teacher effectiveness. Among these characteristics of effective teachers are (a) teacher variability, viz. the parents use many different methods to teach their children, (b)

enthusiasm, (c) task orientation, viz. once the learner is on a task, they have him or her take the time to complete it; which is what many home schoolers find they are able to do with their flexible schedules, and (d) clarity and organization in instruction to the student; which is perhaps easier for home school teachers since they have so few students (Medley, 1982; T.P. Evans, personal communication, April 30, 1984). Each of the preceding seven ideas concerning the apparent desirable learner outcomes of home school could entail a lengthy study in itself. At best, the research regarding home school youth is slight. Nevertheless, should more research be done regarding this option in U. S. education?

Research Potentials

Stephen Arons (1983), an expert in legal studies, did a careful legal and philosophical analysis of book censorship, home schooling, and educational subcultures in *Compelling belief: The Culture of American Schooling*. He proposed some provoking questions:

> If a child is in school six hours each day for twelve years merely as a logical result of changes in the social and economic structure over the last 200 years, why do a few thousand families seeking to educate their children at home evoke such virulent official reactions and such widespread public attention? Why is it that millions of children who are pushouts or dropouts amount to business as usual in the public schools, while one family educating a child at home becomes a major threat to universal public education and the survival of democracy? (p. 88)

It would seem that educators, legislators, state departments of education, parents, and others would want more empirical data regarding home schooling before they further laud or denigrate its potentials. The fact that, contrary to Aron's figure, perhaps far more than 50,000 families are presently educating their children at home makes research even more important.

Some of the various suggestions for further research follow:

1. Compare more carefully the academic achievement scores of home and conventional school students (Linden, 1983; Wendel, 1985; Taylor, 1986).

2. Investigate socialization aspects of home school compared to conventional school (Linden, 1983).

3. Develop a profile of the types of programs and materials used by home schoolers (Linden, 1983).

4. Survey attitudes of school administrators (Linden, 1983), certified teachers, education specialists, and the public toward home school.

5. Study the effect of teacher certification of home school teachers (Wendel, 1985) or education courses taken by home school teachers on student achievement.

6. Investigate possible uses of television, computers, and olher forms of technology in the home school (Wendel, 1985).

7. Conduct a longitudinal study tracing '...the self-concept of home schooling children both before and subsequent to their re-entry into a conventional school system' (Taylor, 1986, p. 191).

8. Profile the lives of home schooled people after high school graduation age (R. Smith, personal communication, July 1,1986).

Furthermore, it would be of interest to science educators to have information concerning the scientific development of home school youth. To date, there is scanty information about the achievement of these learners on standardized science tests. The ADE (1985) reported that CCS home school fourth through eleventh grade students scored, on the average, 15.1 percentiles higher (68th to 90th percentile) than their conventional school Alaskan peers on the SRA science test. The only other information on the science achievement of these youth was provided by an anthropologist. M A. Pitman (personal communication, June 26. 1986) administered the Metropolitan Achievement Test to a small number of home school youth in Ohio, and they scored above average on the science portion of the test. In addition, this author is not aware of any information regarding the scientific literacy (Showalter, 1974; National Science Teachers Association, 1982) of home school learners.

It would be helpful, to home schoolers and to society in general, to (a) determine whether there is a significant relationship between whether a learner is home schooled or conventional schooled and at least one aspect of their scientific literacy and (b) determine whether there is a significant relationship between type of schooling (home or conventional) and scores on science achievement tests.

Among other things, such research might reveal to educators whether more energy should be given to educating parents (Becher, 1982; Moore & Moore, 1986), to "...what professionals can learn from studying parents and children at home" (Tizard & Hughes, 1984, p. 267), or to a more efficient homeostasis of the two. In fact, it might one day be realized by many that perhaps the home schooling movement is

> ...a laboratory for the intensive and long-range study of children's learning and of the ways in which friendly and concerned adults can help them learn. It is a research project, done at no cost, of a kind for which neither the public schools nor the government could afford to pay. (Holt, 1983, p. 393)

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Brian Ray presented this tremendously detailed, comprehensive and valuable study in partial fulfillment of the doctoral degree in science, math, and computer education at Oregon State University in 1986. We are grateful to him for permission to reproduce it in **ΣΚΟΛΕ.**

BOOK REVIEWS:

RACHEL AND HER CHILDREN

by Jonathan Kozol

Jonathan Kozol does his best to keep cool while writing about homeless children. He tries to keep *cool* while reporting that there are some 500,000 of them in this wealthy land, a number slightly greater than the population of Atlanta, Denver or St. Louis. He tries to keep cool while reporting that federal support for low-income housing dropped from $28 billion to $9 billion between 1981 and 1986 and that legal evictions in New York City during one recent year totaled nearly half a million. He tries to keep cool while reporting that although New York owns more than 100,000 units of empty low cost housing, it squanders $2,000 or more per family per month on squalid welfare hotels, and that the largest such hotel in New York is operated by (irony of ironies) South African "investors."

Kozol has greater trouble keeping cool when he actually goes into the Martinique Hotel, once a fashionable establishment on Manhattan's Herald Square, and starts talking with some of the 1,400 children (400 families) crammed in there. Like the girl he calls Angie, who is twelve and already skilled at fending off the men who want to buy her. "I may be little but I have a brain," she tells Kozol. He likes her. "She's alert and funny and... I enjoy her skipping moods," he writes. One day he learns that after her mother's welfare check failed to arrive, Angie was caught stealing food from the supermarket and was brought home in handcuffs. "When I came to this hotel I still believed in God," the mother tells Kozol. "I said: 'Maybe God can help us to survive.' I lost my faith. My hopes. And everything. Ain't nobody - no God. no Jesus - gonna help us - no way."

Perhaps the most terrible of all these terrible stories is that of Holly Peters, 24, who was raised in foster homes and worked for a time as a waitress, got married, went broke, lived on the dole. She was so run-down when her son Benjamin was born that he weighed only 4-2 lbs.: he survived in an oxygen tent, receiving blood injections. During that hospital stay, he contracted a viral infection that left him partly blind, deaf, hydrocephalic, brain damaged. After three months, the hospital released him and told Holly to give him phenobarbital when he had seizures. She took him to a welfare hotel near Times Square. Five weeks later she was evicted. She says it was because she wanted her husband to stay with her, which is against the rules. Holly and the baby slept several nights in the offices of the welfare bureaucrats.

The baby was having so many seizures by now that she took him back to the hospital. The doctors operated on him. inserting a shunt into his skull to relieve the pressure on his brain, then released him again. "It was evenin', like about four-thirty, five o'clock," Holly recalls, "and we was walkin' in the street. It was rainin', as a matter of fact. Not a warm night." Several days later Holly was still wandering around with her dying baby, being sent from hotel to hotel. "The place the shunt went in, his wound had gotten bad,' she tells Kozol. 'It was sunk in and you could see his skull. His eyes was sinkin' too.'

In a sense, Kozol is not being fair in his passionate presentation of these tragedies. Even the word homeless is a bit misleading in that it implies people sleeping on the streets in the snow, while Kozol is really writing about welfare cases, about the poor, whom ye have with you always. And all those he interviews are invariably the virtuous and the innocent - the others presumably do not give interviews. But Kozol is not really trying to be fair. An award-winning gadfly of the Boston schools where he once taught *(Death at an Early Age, Illiterate America)*. he is trying to assault and appall his readers, to jar them from their complacent acceptance of the young beggars on their doorstep. To some extent, he succeeds in arousing anger. He quotes Robert Coles as saying that these are times when people 'have to throw up their hands in heaviness of heart ... and say, in desperation: God save them, those children; and for allowing such a state of affairs to continue, God save us too.'

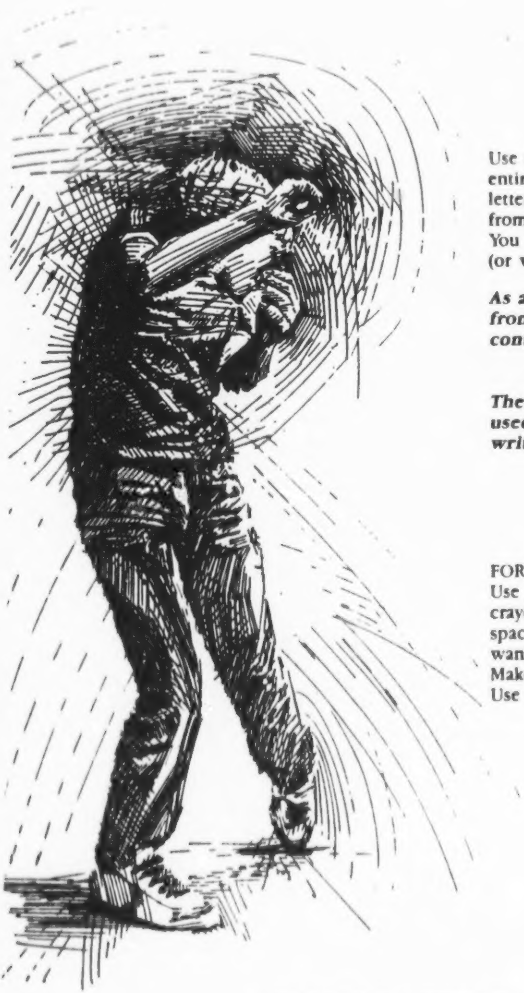
Well, yes, that sounds fine, but what is actually to be done? One icy morning in New York last month, the frozen bodies of two newborn babies were found in trash heaps in different parts of the city. Neither one had a name. The newspapers devoted no more than a few lines to the story.

—By *Otto Friedrich*

***Learning Is: A Moving Experience - Dance for Lovers of Children and for the Child Within* by Teresa Benzwie PhD.**
Zephyr Press, 430 South Essex Lane, Tucson, AZ 85711
$21.95.

This book is an absolute gift! When I was first handed a copy, I was so drawn to the physical appearance, I had to sit down right then and flip through it. Now, understand, this is in the beginning of a school day while I am orchestrating my class of kindergartners and first graders as they move from morning meeting into their homeroom class. But I just had to. And what a joy! The author's son's drawings that absolutely fill the book are outstanding in their ability to convey the flow and movement happening with all the kids. So, this was my introduction to this book about moving. I was ready to dance!

The gift here is the acknowledgement that when we encourage children to experience something with their bodies through movement, the learning that happens is more personal and on a very deep level that I believe stays with them in a very different way from 'memorized' learning. It is more uniquely their own, as well, which just eliminates the competition that so often can surface in a classroom. And Teresa Benzwie shows that *any* learning can be an experience of movement - spelling words spelled with their bodies, math facts bounced, shapes and colors formed with the group. Just everything! She shares a wealth of ideas of games and fantasies that any teacher can do just with the space in a classroom when the desks are shoved up against the wall. And she is aware enough to note that when the teacher participates fully, there is an important model being born. And I



Use the dance form to spell out your entire first name. Begin and end each letter separately. Each letter can begin from a different place in the room. You need not be limited to printing (or writing) in a straight line.

As a variation suggest moving from one letter to the next in a continuous flow.

These alphabet exercises can also be used for spelling words, cursive writing, blends, numerals or shapes.

Scribbling

FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN
Use your whole body as if it were a crayon. You are going to use the entire space as if it were a drawing paper. I want you to scribble all over the paper. Make little scribbles and big scribbles. Use the whole space. Use a little space.

A REVIEW LETTER GAME

Freeze in the shape of letter 'T'. Now tiptoe saying the sound of 'T'. Freeze as a 'T'. Now touch someone . . . . freeze as a 'T'. Now be a Tiger . . . . freeze as a 'T'.

Move freely around the room. When I say "freeze", form the letter 'A'. Next time find a different way.

Note: these two illustrations by Robert Bender are taken from Teresa Benzwie's book.

ROPES

Clothesline will do, each, three to four feet long.

Create designs on the floor that you will follow with your whole body.

Recreate the same design in the air.

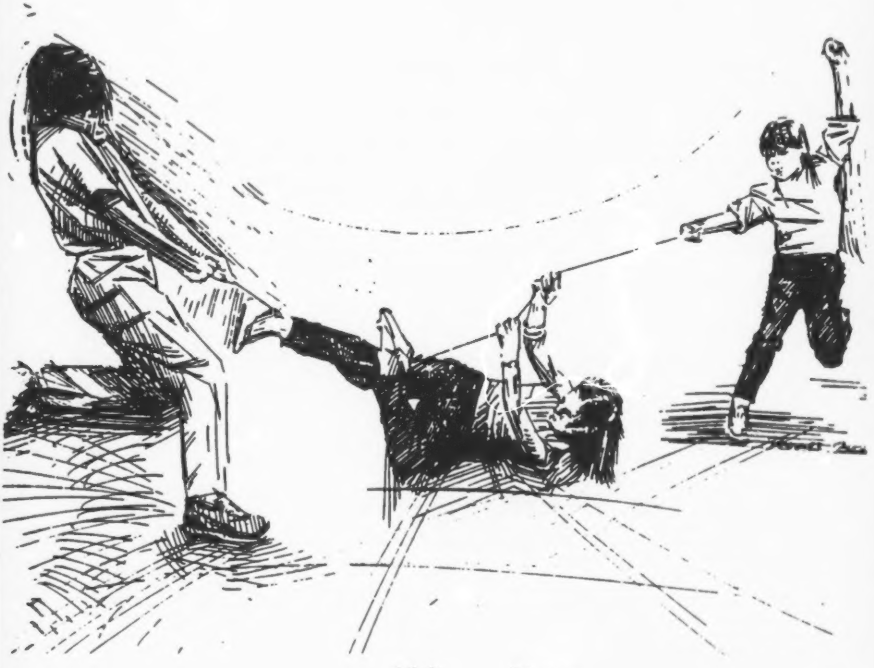
Use the entire space in the room to remake your design without the rope.

Alternate sitting and lying down, holding both ends of the rope in your hands. Stretch your foot or both your feet into the middle. Stretch and bend your legs creating different shapes with the rope.

Bring your arms over your head, behind you.

Take your legs up, to the side and down. Allow your body to turn to the side, roll, sit, lie down.

Each movement stretches the rope into a different shape.



must say for myself, I was reminded that to move is the "Way Out" for me, as well, from my below-freezing winter slump that I can fall into at this time of year.

It was a wonderful morning the first day when I helped the class practice their spelling words by spelling them with their own bodies. We all felt energized, loosened up, and smart by the time we were done. And the next day, I was flooded with requests for more, as well as noticing that almost the entire class remembered the spelling of the previous words! I also really appreciate her work with emotions and social behavior through movement. It was great one morning to start the day, a bitterly cold and snowy day, with a group of thirty kids and adults 'opening and closing' themselves and then each other. Then we shared how that felt, and the comments were all deeply personal and unique, the faces beaming, and there were no right answers. "I felt like a turtle who came out of his shell." "When I was closed, I felt angry, but when I was opened up, I felt real good - just relaxed." It was also beautiful how tenderly the kids treated each other, with a great deal of respect for each other's space and each other's body. This is addressed throughout the book and it is of great value. I have found that in the two weeks I have been using the book, each time there is release, relaxation, and a warm connection made between all who participate. Also, any learning activities that have followed these movement times, I have noticed that kids who often have anxieties about a certain task seem to have dropped it and are more able to handle a difficult lesson.

It is in that dimension - bringing the outer world to an inner world and then bringing the new light from that inner place out to a new situation in the 'outer' world - that I cannot say enough about this book. Every teacher should get their hands on this!

Reviewed by Betsy Mercogliano, mother of two, teacher and co-director at The Free School, Albany, New York

CHILD'S WORK: TAKING CHILDREN'S CHOICES SERIOUSLY

by Nancy Wallace

Nancy Wallace's book, *Child's Work: Taking Children's Choices Seriously*, is a real pleasure to read; it is a well-written, absorbing personal account of Nancy's and her children's experiences as together they undertook the challenge of home-schooling. Nancy has the courage and sensitivity to listen to her children, Vita and Ishmael, and to allow them to explore and find the ways in which they feel they are able to learn. We see them become skilled at music, math, art, reading and writing.

As I was reading about the experiences of these impressive children, I wondered how much was the effect of God-given talent and how much was because Nancy and her husband really struggled with letting the children do their learning in their own way, often, as parents, feeling much doubt and fear about whether they were doing "the right thing for the children." We find that Nancy learned a great deal from her children in learning to trust her own instincts as Vita and Ishmael were following theirs. If we could only all learn to listen to the children who are under our care, allowing them to find what excites them in life and giving them permission to explore that excitement, what a different culture we might live in!

As I was reading this book, I reflected on my own rigid schooling experience, the schooling which has had a great deal to do with squelching my own creativity. I have been noticing how that experience contaminates my own being with children, either my own or those under my care in The Free School where I teach. At times at school I have found myself interrupting my kindergarteners play to have an 'organized activity' because I felt I should be 'teaching' them something, after all, even in an alternative school, that is my job. (or so I tend to think at times) Actually I don't believe that there is intrinsically anything wrong with an 'organized activity' - the important thing is to remember the dance. Nancy Wallace's book provided me with another tool to remember that teaching is a dance, and that children are the choreographers.

One of my favorite examples of Nancy allowing her children to do the choreography of their own learning dance is the one of Vita refusing to spell a word the same way more than once as she was writing her many stories and plays. Of course, as Vita was to discover for herself, this oftentimes made her writings unreadable to others. And since having her writings understood by others was very important to her, Vita decided that spelling words as they are presented by Webster made a great deal of sense. She did not make this decision because the adults around her were telling her it was wrong, but because it made sense to her and was important to her! And my life experiences have taught me that self-motivation is the only thing that works in learning anything in life.

The one difficulty I had while reading this book was the sections which focused on Vita's and, more specifically, Ishmael's learning in the field of music. Both children are very talented as musicians and Ishmael began to compose at an early age. I found Nancy's ability to listen to her children's decisions about how they wanted to learn music as impressive as her willingness to allow them choices in other areas of learning; however, I got bogged down in the long explicatives using music terms which, as a non-music-minded person, left me not knowing what she was talking about. I imagine someone interested in music composition would find these parts of the book very enlightening, though.

In answer to my own question above, it is probably so that Ishmael and Vita are very talented people to begin with and the ways in which Nancy and her husband were able to support their children simply allowed these talents to blossom to their fullest. But even so, I know that the innate message that comes forth in *Child's Work* is a good one and one which I will continue to reflect upon. May we all allow the children of our families, nuclear and extended, to have choices and then to take their choices seriously.

Reviewed by Nancy Mittleman, mother of four and teacher at The Free School in Albany.

photo by Elsa Corbluth

In her seventy-one years, Mary M. Leue, mother of five and grandmother of eleven, has been a Maine farmer, registered nurse, teacher, civil rights and anti-war activist, lay midwife, leader in both alternative education and natural childbirth movements, therapist, community organizer, editor, writer, desktop publisher, and bookseller. She has published a number of articles in national and international journals of education and psychotherapy, including the *Journal of Orgonomy, Energy and Character, Holistic Education Review*, and *SKOLE*, the alternative education journal that she created seven years ago.

Born and raised in New England, Mary graduated with an A.B. in history from Bryn Mawr College in 1940. In 1943, she received her graduate nursing degree from The Children's Medical Center Hospital School of Nursing in Boston, Massachusetts. In the early 1950's, she accompanied her husband, then a young professor of philosophy, to Denton, Texas, where she raised five children, taught school and did graduate work in English literature and education at Texas Woman's University. Mary moved to Albany in the early 1960's and began training with several internationally known therapists, in addition to doing graduate work in psychology at the State University of New York, where she is now a Fellow of the Graduate Program in the Center for Arts and Humanities.

Responding to the distress of her ten-year-old son, who was suffering badly in the Albany public schools, Mary decided to start The Free School, which is now one of the longest running inner city independent alternative schools in the nation. Influenced by the father of anarchism Prince Pyotr Kropotkin, by Mahatma Gandhi, and by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Mary firmly believed that open, democratic education should be available to the children of the poor as well as to those of the middle and upper classes. When she consulted with A.S. Neill, founder of Summerhill, about such a possibility, his response was pure Neill: 'I would think myself daft to try.'

In 1969, Mary proceeded to gather an entire group of 'daft' individuals who are together to this day, having joined her in her vision of living and working in genuine community in a postindustrial world. Guided by Wilhelm Reich's concept of 'work democracy,' Mary and the others began creating a series of small scale community institutions to both broaden the school's mission and support the health and growth of community members. She saw clearly from the start that such an experiment would need to have its own internal economy and be based on shared, peer-level leadership, and that it would depend on ongoing emotional honesty for its long-term survival. Finally, the awareness developed in Mary and in others that a vital community needs a spiritual basis as well, and what has evolved is multifaceted, drawing from many diverse traditions.

U.S.A. $12.95 Can. $13.95
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